

New Readings of Heinrich Suso's *Horologium
sapientiae*

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Oslo, April 2013

Jon Ø. Flæten

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Introduction

This study is about a late medieval bestseller and a forgotten classic. Heinrich Suso's *Horologium sapientiae* was one of the most widely read devotional books in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹ The *Horologium* has survived in a large number of manuscripts, in Latin as well as in translations to all the major vernacular languages of Europe. Suso's expressive imagery, his religious 'love language,' and his intense visions of the suffering Christ and of the afterlife, were omnipresent in the religious culture of late medieval Europe. The work inspired many later authorities on spiritual life, from Ludolph of Saxony and Nicolaus of Cusa to Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit movement.² The *Horologium* was especially popular in the Low Countries and religious milieus such as the *Devotio moderna* were clearly under susonian influence.³

Horologium sapientiae is an intense work of religious fiction. It is written by a man of unique literary talent and religious fervor. The *Horologium* is the product of a religious culture that was *under pressure*, a culture pervaded by eschatological anticipation and religious anxiety. However, the work is also an example of how this culture produced new and innovative forms of popular theology that provided relief to pious minds. This study will argue that Suso's approaches may be seen as a pioneering effort of late medieval 'theology of piety.' This concept, developed by German scholars, enables appreciative and accurate analysis of certain types of theological literature from the later medieval period that does not easily answer to categories such as 'scholastic' or 'mystical' or 'monastic' theology.

¹ I prefer the 'hybrid' and partly latinized form Heinrich Suso. Other much used forms are Heinrich Seuse, common in German scholarship, or the anglicized form Henry Suso.

² See Künzle (1977), pp. 285-89.

³ See Künzle (1977), 285-6 with references; Breuer (1984); See also Werner J. Hoffman's contribution in Blumrich / Kaiser (1994), pp. 202-54.

In this study, Suso's strategies of 'pressure relief' will be explored with specific attention to three main themes that are central in the *Horologium*: the ideal of sustaining suffering and hardships, *tribulatio* (Chapter One); Suso's teaching on Eucharist devotion (Chapter Two); and his thoughts and instructions concerning death, death preparation and the afterlife (Chapter Three). The themes and the approach of this study will be presented in more detail below.

We shall begin with a brief outline of Suso's life, his literary production as a whole, and the place of the *Horologium* within it.⁴

Heinrich Suso was born into the noble von Berg family sometime between 1295 and 1300 in or near the city of Constance by the Bodensee.⁵ This is an area where he would spend much of his life. In honor of his mother, whose piety was a major inspiration for him, Heinrich took her family name, Suse.⁶ He joined the Dominican order in Constance already at age thirteen, which is in fact earlier than what was the permitted lower limit of fifteen. This seems to have been related to a gift from his family to the Constance Dominicans, that is, a case of simony, and this circumstance bothered his conscience to a great extent.⁷ At least, this is what Suso's own account in his *Vita*, his "Life," informs us. The realities are not known. Suso's writings nevertheless suggest a sensitive and perhaps melancholic personality that was susceptible to such spiritual qualms.

Suso studied in Cologne under Johannes Futerer and the more famous Meister Eckhart, who made a strong impact. Besides this stay in Cologne, and perhaps studies in Strassbourg, Suso seems to have spent most of his life in or around Constance and, from about 1348, in the city of Ulm. As a Dominican friar, he spent much of his professional life in the service of the *cura monialium*, the pastoral care for nuns. This meant some travelling to female Dominican convents in this area. Suso developed a close friendship with Elsbeth Stigel, a nun at the

⁴ Several biographical outlines are easily accessed. See the comprehensive introductions given in Bihlmeyer (1907/61) and Künzle (1977). Shorter and more recent accounts are usually based upon these two. See Colledge (1994); Haas (1996), pp. 9-24; McGinn (2005a), pp. 197-204.

⁵ This and the following information about Suso's life are based upon Bihlmeyer's account (1907/61), pp. 63*-150*, if not otherwise stated.

⁶ See Bihlmeyer (1907/61), pp. 66-7. Seuse, which he is known as in German speaking countries, is a later form that appears first in a fifteenth century print. See Ruh (1996), 417.

⁷ See *Vita* 62.32-63.6; see also Bihlmeyer's comments (1907/61), pp. 72-3*.

convent of Töss, for whom he was also confessor. Stigel is also known as one of the primary authors of the Töss Sister-Book, and was relatively well educated (for a woman in this period) and, like Suso, she appears to have been of a fervent religious personality; the relationship between Suso and Stigel was also a literary collaboration. Stigel was responsible for collecting the letters that would become Suso's *Briefbuchlein* (Bfb), and she may also have contributed to parts of Suso's *Vita*, where she also appears in person, as the "spiritual daughter" of the Servant (Suso). The pastoral care for nuns provided Suso with both the material and purpose for much of his literary production.

For a period during the 1340's Suso was prior at the female convent of St. Katherinenthal / Diessenhofen. A main reason for this stay was that the Dominicans of the *Inselkloster* in Constance were forced into exile from the city as a result of a papal interdict. This interdict was the culmination of a conflict between John XXII and the Emperor Lewis of Bavaria. It is widely agreed upon that it is this conflict that gave Suso the material for the dramatic vision of "the ram," the tyrant leader who persecutes a small flock of devout friends of God, in chapter five of Book II of the *Horologium*.⁸

The influence of Meister Eckhart's thought on Suso is seen especially in his earliest work, the "Little book of Truth," *Buchlein der warheit* (*Bdw*). The *Bdw* shows Suso's speculative side; the book was an attempt to defend the ideas of Eckhart and to delineate his teaching as orthodox against the false mysticism of the "Free Spirits" individuals or groups that troubled religious authorities in this period with their radical mysticism and thoughts of unrestrained spiritual liberty. Such ideas had influenced milieus of semi-religious, beguines and beguards, especially in southern Germany in Suso's lifetime.⁹ Despite the evident ambition to clear Eckhart's name and to combat the heretical tendencies of his time, the content of the *Bdw* nonetheless came too close to the dangerous ideas associated

⁸ See Chapter One.

⁹ See McGinn (2005), pp. 200; 217-239. A fine study of Free Spirit heresy is Lerner (1971/2007).

with Free Spirit heresy.¹⁰ As part of an offensive within the Dominican order against the ‘Eckhart school,’ Suso was suspended from his position as *lector* and suspected of heresy for his *Bdw*, but a full investigation was never carried out.¹¹

Suso’s *Vita*, a work labeled by Richard Kieckhefer as an “autohagiography,” is where many of the details that we know about Suso’s life are found. As the coinage says, however, this is not an autobiography in the modern sense, but a highly stylized portrayal of an exemplary spiritual life in a mixture of hagiographic conventions, personal experiences, and mystical teaching, and pastoral instructions for enclosed women.¹² Suso’s works, and the *Vita* in particular, suggest that he knew first-hand about a hard ascetic lifestyle. The work is renowned for its accounts of extreme, even creative, forms of self-mortification, tendencies that are also seen in the Dominican Sister-Books such as that from Elsbeth Stigel’s Töss monastery.¹³ Beginning his career with extreme self-torture, the Servant in the *Vita* is led to a point of spiritual crisis and reorientation that entails a rejection of asceticism. The Servant’s conversion and newly won insight and disregard of religious works is accompanied by an elaborate mystical reinterpretation and interiorization of the ideal of suffering as *compassio* with Christ—and a realization that suffering in relation to worldly surroundings does not stop. Suso’s idea of suffering and hardship as a principle element of pious existence is also important in the *Horologium*, as we shall see.¹⁴

¹⁰ Herbert Grundmann, in his classic study of religious movements of the Middle Ages, argued that the orthodox mysticism of authors such as Tauler or Suso and the heresy of the Free Spirit arose from the same “religious movement,” and hence the difficulty for contemporary authorities of distinguishing them. See Grundmann (1961/2002), p. 241.

¹¹ See Ruh (1996), pp. 418, with further reference.

¹² See McGinn (2005a), p. 202 with references.

¹³ Another extreme example is the *Offenbarungen*, the “Revelations,” of Elsbeth von Oye, see Ochsenbein (1990); the Sister Book of Töss written by Suso’s friend Elsbeth Stigel does not stand back in terms of harsh asceticism. This is seen in all the Sister-Books. For the Dominican ‘culture of suffering,’ Suso and the Sister Books, see most recently David Tinsley’s book *The scourge and the Cross* (2010). For the German mystics and their efforts to correct this asceticism, see Langer (1987).

¹⁴ See Angenendt (2005b), pp. 221-4; Langer (2000). Having almost caused his own death through self-torture, the Servant in the *Vita* gives up his *uebungen*, his “spiritual exercises,” but only to encounter a whole new ‘category’ of sufferings (*leiden*). As he wanders into the world, the Servant is falsely accused of poisoning a well, of stealing a statue from a church, and of unseemly relations with a woman. How far these accounts reflect events in Suso’s own life cannot be deter-

Suso collected and edited all his main German works into what he called the *Exemplar*. This collection consists of the mentioned *Bdw* and the *Vita* together with the *Buchlein der ewigen weisheit* (*Bdew*)—the precursory German ‘version’ of the *Horologium*—and the *Briefbuchlein* (*Bfb*), a number of Suso’s pastoral letters that had been collected by Elsbeth Stigel and then rewritten by Suso.¹⁵ This editing of the *Exemplar* was completed during Suso’s final years in Ulm, where he died in 1366, about 70 years old.

Horologium sapientiae

Most scholars think that the *Horologium sapientiae* was completed in 1333 or 1334.¹⁶ As mentioned, it is a considerably ‘expanded version’ of Suso’s Middle High German work, the “Little Book of Eternal Wisdom,” *Buchlein der ewigen weisheit* (*Bdew*).¹⁷ The *Bdew* was in its own right a popular and widely transmitted work, however not on the same scale as the *Horologium*. The two books have most parts in common: with the *Horologium*, Suso adopted (and expanded) most of the German version. They are based on the same fundamental idea and structuring principle: the spiritual beginner, the Servant (*diener*) in the *Bdew* or the Disciple (*discipulus*) in the *Horologium*, in dialogue with Eternal Wisdom, a female character that is presented as the “sum of everything that is good.” Suso draws on an ancient tradition of philosophical dialogues with *Sapientia*, the female ‘princi-

mined exactly. *Exemplar* 105; *Vita* 62.32-63.6; *Exemplar* 105. See also Bihlmeyer’s comments, (1907/61), pp. 72-3*; 62. For disregard of works as a tendency in late medieval hagiography, see Vauchez (2005), p. 533.

¹⁵ On Suso’s letters, see Bihlmeyer 117*-122*; Ruh (1996), pp. 469-71. The *Bfb* is “Pastoralbriefe im Rahmen der *cura monialium*” (Ruh), a total of eleven letters that are reworked versions from ‘raw material’ in the *Grosses Briefbuch*, 27 letters collected by Elsbeth Stigel. The reworking of these letters and the editing of the *Exemplar* generally demonstrates Suso’s careful efforts of controlling the composition of his total oeuvre in a way that is quite unique in this period. See McGinn (2005), p. 199; see also Ruh (1996), pp. 421-2.

¹⁶ See Künzle (1977), pp. 19-27. See Summary of the arguments in Colledge (1994), pp. 10-15. McGinn (2005), p. 198, proposes a later time span for the writing of the book, 1334-37, for reasons that I cannot discern; Fenten (2007b) argues for 1333 as the year of completion.

¹⁷ For a comprehensive comparison of the *Bdew* and the *Horologium* in Künzle (1977), pp. 28-54. It was earlier believed by some that the *Bdew* was an abbreviated version that built on the *Horologium*. Künzle refuted this once and for all.

ple of wisdom' as seen above all in the work of Boethius.¹⁸ For the protagonist, who is a figure of identification for the reader,¹⁹ the dialogue is a process of spiritual edification and also a lover-beloved relationship in the fashion of bridal mysticism that was so popular since the time of Bernard of Clairvaux.

Although usually female, Eternal Wisdom is, however, also Christ. Suso thus builds on the identification of *sapientia* with *filius Dei* in medieval exegetic and scholastic traditions.²⁰ This two-sidedness of Wisdom/Christ enables a fascinating dynamic in the text; the dialogue shifts from Eternal Wisdom to Christ, who provides first person narratives of the passion, and then back to Wisdom, who reflects on the meaning of the passion from a broader perspective. Thus, the main dialogue between the Disciple and Wisdom is occasionally 'interrupted' by new layers of vision. The Disciple experiences the passion event, as well as visions of the afterlife, of Heaven and Hell, and he shudders at the 'sight' of God's fierce judgment. Visionary sequences in the *Horologium* also introduces others dialogue partners in the place of Eternal Wisdom/Christ. In chapter sixteen of Book I, Virgin Mary becomes the Disciple's dialogue partner and is 'interviewed' about the passion event as she experienced it. Another such case, which will be given close attention in this study, is the vision of an *unprepared dying man*, who appears to the Disciple in Book II.

As we understand, the *Horologium* is an intense work. The reader follows the spiritual beginner through an experiential process of learning as the text moves through sequences of intensely shifting moods, depending on the topics discussed. From passages of a high-flown language that praises the sweetness of divine

¹⁸ Suso's borrowings Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* is seen in the passage where Eternal Wisdom appear to the disciple in the first chapter of the *Horologium*, see *Watch* 71; *Hor.* 379.15-17. See Künzle (1977), p. 379 with further reference. Although the use of the figure of Wisdom as dialogue partner can be traced back to ancient philosophy (Plato, Boethius), Suso's dialogues, as has been noticed by scholars, are not philosophical dialogues in a strict sense. Suso's dialogue partner also bares similarities with Francis' Lady Poverty. Stirnimann has pointed to the dialogues between *the soul* and *Love* in Mechthild of Magdeburg and Gertrud der Grosse as a type of dialogue that is more closely related to that of Suso. But even in this context, Suso's works stand out with their uncommonly individualized dialogue partner. See Stirnimann (1980), p. 222-23.

¹⁹ Fenten (2007b), p. 7.

²⁰ Cf. Haas (1979), pp. 297-8.

influence, the text gives way to explorations of the painful *absence of God* and the agonizing longing for signs of divine acceptance; notions or visions of an angry judge-God, outbursts of fear and anxiety related to sin, tribulation, and spiritual insufficiency, are never far away.

Most parts of the *Horologium* are also found in the ‘forerunner,’ the *Bdew*. The *Horologium* is, however, more than just a translation of the *Bdew* from German to Latin. The work is significantly expanded, and several chapters in the Latin work are entirely new.²¹ Notable additions are the parts concerned with ‘science criticism’ and the contrasting of philosophical theology of the schools with the true “spiritual philosophy” of Eternal Wisdom, in which the Disciple is being trained. Suso’s criticism of contemporary scientific theology forms an important backdrop for the inner devotion and the pious and moral refinement that he tries to encourage throughout the book. Compared to the *Bdew* the *Horologium* also stands out with its bridal mysticism and its many encouragements to the reader to engage in the ‘game of love’ (*ludus amoris*) with Eternal Wisdom, as seen particularly in the last parts of the work.²²

What audience did Suso have in mind for the *Horologium*? Suso dedicated the *Horologium* to Hugo de Vaucemain, general of the Dominican order at that time.²³ This fact, as well as the many references to Dominican liturgy, and, not least, the parts that deal with monastic decay and spiritual reform, has made scholars emphasize the Dominican profile of the book and Dominican friars as the primary intended audience.²⁴ Pius Künzle, in the extensive introduction to his 1977 edition of the *Horologium*, concluded that Suso with this work had a *narrower* scope in terms of audience than was the case with his vernacular works.²⁵

The Dominican setting and the improvement of a monastic life in decay²⁶ was undoubtedly a main concern for Suso with the *Horologium*. Elements of

²¹ See a summary of the parts that are unique to the *Horologium* in Künzle (1977), pp. 53-54.

²² See McGinn 2005b, p. 201 with references.

²³ See *Hor.* 368.1.

²⁴ Esp. I, 5 and 12; II, 1 and 3. See Künzle (1977) *Einführung*.

²⁵ This view is held more recently by Fenten (2007b).

²⁶ See Bihlmeyer (1907/61), p. 72*.

spiritual life that we may identify as ‘Dominican’—uses of Dominican liturgy in the text, or reflections on monastic reform or school theology that may be linked to such a setting—are more frequent in the *Horologium* than in the *Bdew*.

However, Künzle also surveyed the diffusion of this work within the entire range of religious orders, as well as secular clerics and even some lay book owners.²⁷ With the invention of printing technology, this diffusion was even wider.

Assertions of a relatively narrow address *and* the evidence of wide diffusion makes it tempting to ask the following question: Could it be that Suso had originally wanted to address an audience of Dominican friars, but that he unintended struck a chord in the religious world of fourteenth and fifteenth century Europe? It is, of course, difficult to establish the *intentio auctoris* for any work; we must be careful not to let subsequent events, in this case the reception history of the *Horologium* and the discovery of manuscripts in particular settings steer our assessment of the work in itself and the context in which it arose.

Nevertheless, the fact that Suso addresses a Dominican setting²⁸ does not have to rule out that he also aimed beyond this group of readers. For one thing, he must have known that a Latin work could more easily be translated to other vernacular languages than a Middle High German work.²⁹ From the beginning, the *Horologium* had more potential for reaching out to wide audiences than the *Bdew*.

With ‘wide audience’ in relation to the *Horologium* we may assume a spectrum that includes non-ordained priests, semi-religious of various kinds, such as beguines or tertiaries, and other shades and forms of religious existence that were possible in this period.³⁰ Religious ideals of monastic rigor and the battle against the *vana curiositas* that school theology was associated with were in this period increasingly applied also to lay audiences, as scholars have recently been careful

²⁷ See Künzle (1977), esp. pp. 214-19.

²⁸ See also Book II, chapter 6, where he gives instructions, probably intended for friars, in how to incorporate the parts of the book into sermons and conferences.

²⁹ See McGinn (2005), p. 201.

³⁰ See Hamm (1999), 13-14; Mossman (2010), p. 27-8.

to remind us.³¹ Lay audiences, for their part, sought to adapt their lives according to models of the life of friars, monks or nuns.

Before we proceed to comment on previous research and the theoretical framework employed in this study, let us consider a ‘sample’ from one of the new parts that Suso added when he made the *Horologium*. This will give us an impression of Suso’s approaches in this work, and his intention as to reach out beyond institutional boundaries.

Every-Day Devotion

In chapter seven in Book II of *Horologium sapientiae* Suso provides a series of prayers and devotional exercises that are held as particularly useful for private devotion in everyday life. In order to encourage and guide his audience toward such practices, Suso makes use of a story about a youth, Amandus, who, for his part, had taken extreme measures in his pursuit of closeness to his beloved Christ.

Greatly longing to enfold his beloved more in the depths of his heart, he sought out a secret place, and impelled by the amazing vehemence of his love, he stripped the upper part of his body, and taking a sharp knife, he stabbed the bare flesh above his heart where he could see the vital pulse throbbing most strongly, piercing himself so forcefully that every stab was followed by a flow of blood that ran from his chest and dripped down drop by drop. And he stabbed himself so often and so mercilessly here and there that finally in this way he had cut the famous name of his spouse, which is “IHC,” in great capital letters over “the extent of his heart.” (3. Kgs 4.29) And when for a while he had carried these recent and bleeding wounds of love, so very sweet to him, in his discolored flesh with a great fire of love, in the end, after many days, they healed, and his flesh perfectly preserved that name, letter by letter, in that place.³²

The story demonstrates the intense piety and the expressive and highly imaginative style of writing that characterizes Suso’s works. The story ‘tattooing’ of the chest is also found in the *Vita* and has become a famous example of the ‘susionian’

³¹ See Burger (1999); Hamm (1999).

³² *Watch 321; Hor. 596.18-23 hoc modo nomen praeclarum suae sponsae, quod est IHC, magnis et capitalibus litteris ... exaravit. Cum autem haec amoris vulnera recentia et sanguinolenta, sibi nimium dulcia, in carne livida aliquamdiu cum multo amoris incendio prætasset, tandem post multos dies sanatus clare et perfecte praedictum nomen caro illa in eodem loco integraliter conservavit.*

heroic sufferer and of the brutal asceticism that is seen in some sources from Suso's surroundings.³³ In the context of the *Horologium*, however, this is precisely what Suso says, a "very noteworthy and strange event" (*valde notabile ac rarum*). That is to say, it outlines a highly unusual devotional practice. Amandus, we read further, also wanted others to become lovers of Christ and engage themselves in the passion, but, emphatically, not in the same way as him:

...because he desired that other devout men should increase in that divine love, he persuaded them to have greater devotion to this name. Not, indeed, that they should do as he had done, and so rashly expose themselves to dangers, or in any way imitate what he had been granted, by a gift which was only for him to acquire by a strength that came from God. But he counseled them that they should always carry that saving name upon them, formed or written out somehow, secretly, to be sure, and concealed, either in some garment or in some other fashion, as they pleased, so as to arouse their love for God.³⁴

Bearing the name of Jesus on his chest, close to his heart, Amandus (literally 'he who will be loved') could constantly and effectively recollect the passion of Christ. Thus, it is said, "he felt the saving fruits of divine love growing so remarkable." This private and manifestation of divine love is held in explicit contrast to a contemporary trend of embroidering the name of one's worldly lover on clothes for all to see.³⁵ Suso stresses that the name of Jesus should be kept close and also secret.³⁶ By engraving the name of Christ, and by keeping this name secretly on his chest, Amandus distinguishes himself from all the lovers of this world, which is what all true friends of God should do. The story of Amandus' engraving pro-

³³ In the *Vita* this story is but one of many scenes of extreme self-mortification. See *Vita* 16.4-30; 143.19-144.2; *Exemplar* 70; 167-8.

³⁴ *Watch* 321-22; *Hor.* 597.5-14 *Fructum vero salutiferum divini amoris inde sibi crescere notabiliter sentiens ex praesentia tanti nominis memoriam iugiter admonentis, cupiensque quoslibet devotos divino in amore proficere, siasit eis proinde huius nominis maiorem curam habere. Non quidem, ut idipsum facerent et se periculo inconsulte committerent, neque illud ullo modo imitari debere, quod sibi ex singulari dono datum fuit virtute divina superare. Sed quod illud nomen salutiferum qualitercumque formatum vel conscriptum, secrete quidem et latenter, aut in veste aliqua vel alias ad libitum pro divini amoris excitatione semper deferent.*

³⁵ See *Watch* 321; *Hor.* 596.24-27.

³⁶ Also in the *Vita* (see below), Suso makes a point out of this secrecy: here the Servant shows these engraved letters only to two of his closest friends. To have such concealed *stigmata* that were revealed only after death is another literary *topos* of late medieval *vitae* of ascetics. See, for instance, the "Töss Sister-Book" ed. Vetter. See also Constable (1996), pp. 151-3.

vides an example such private and secret devotion in contrast to the many “bad religious” who have an outer “religious appearance” but are without grace and devotion on the inside. The emphasis on private devotion can also be seen in connection with the moral rigor and criticism of religious hypocrisy seen throughout the *Horologium*; portrayals of spiritual decay, which takes many forms, we shall see, serves as a backdrop for an ongoing positive encouragement to an inner sensitivity and concentration on the private ‘life with Christ.’³⁷

The warning to the reader against this type of brutal asceticism is very explicit. Instead of imitating Amandus, the reader is recommended a simple practice of recalling and writing down the name of Jesus, a practice that has basically the same function of arousing divine love by recollecting Christ and his passion. It is clearly important for Suso to provide strategies that are easy and safe, applicable not only to religious ‘specialists’ but to all who want to become lovers of eternal Wisdom and to have her as their ‘spiritual bride’. Suso encourages his readers to turn away from worldly love, if they can, and to engage in the “renewal of love” with Eternal Wisdom, and he accommodates this path by pointing to easy and accessible exercises (*cotidiana quaedam levia exercitia*), devotion to the name of Jesus and a series of prayers that are recommended for daily life.³⁸ These practices, he assures, lead to the “marriage of salvation,” a way of expressing future bliss in heaven in terms of bridal mysticism.

In this chapter of the *Horologium*, Suso explicitly addresses people “of different ranks and states,” “whatever may be his condition or state or sex or order or even his religious life.”³⁹ Concerning the prayers that are provided in this chapter, we read that they

³⁷ See especially the *Planctus ecclesiae* chapter (I, 5), *Hor.* 404-416; *Watch* 100-114. See Chapter One in this study.

³⁸ Thus the title of the chapter: “How Many of the Faithful May Be Wedded to Divine Wisdom, and How They Should Renew Themselves Constantly in Wisdom’s Love Through Certain Easy Daily Exercises” *Watch* 314; *Hor.* 590 *Qualiter multi fideles possint sapientiam divinam desponsare, et quomodo per cotidiana quaedam levia exercitia debent se continue in eiusdem amore renovare*. See also *Watch* 323-9; *Hor.* 598-603.

³⁹ *Watch* 319; *Hor.* 595.4 *cuiuscumque condicionis sit vel status aut sexus seu ordinis aut etiam religionis*.

... are so moderated that they need not bring with them any difficulty, and everyone should be able to carry them out with no prejudice to his profession and state of life. Then, too, divine Wisdom does not intend through these to lay down any obligation or religious profession or any sort of restriction, but only a lively reawakening of a devotion that is drowsing, in which anyone who may wish to exercise himself so will act well and praiseworthy; yet, whoever does not do so, he will not in that account sin or be wanting.⁴⁰

The goal is that the same fervent love may be aroused in the readers, although not by the same means as Amandus. It is crucial for Suso that a fruitful inner life may be achieved without extreme means. It may well be that this story of Amandus in the *Horologium* reflects Suso's own experiences with self-mortification, which in turn led him into a spiritual crisis and brought him to new insights and a disregard for such extreme measures.⁴¹ The main point for us, however, is the *transformation*, to speak with German Church historian Christoph Burger, of a specialized form of devotion into easier types of practice for every-day life. These practices aim to attain the inner intensity and spiritual effect of closeness to Christ and the passion achieved by high effort asceticism.⁴²

⁴⁰ II 7, *Watch* 319-20 *Hor.* 595.5-12 ... *quae sic sunt temperate, ut nihil difficultatis importent, et quilibet possit ea facere sine omni praeiudicio suae professionis et status. Siquidem divina sapientia non intendit per ista statuere aliquam obligationem vel professionem aut astrictionem qualemcumque, sed solum quondam novam dormitantis devotionis spontaneam excitationem, in qua, qui se exercitare voluerit, bene facit et laudabiliter; qui autem hoc non facit, pro tanto non peccat nec delinquit.* From this follows the encouragement to have devotion to the name and other pious exercises (mostly prayers), see *Watch* 319-29; *Hor.* 595-603.

⁴¹ See Angenendt (1980); see also Vauchez (2005), p. 533, for the general tendency of disregard for outer works in later medieval saints. See Chapter One in this study, pp. 60-63; 97-104.

⁴² Burger's idea of a 'transformation' of theology in the later medieval period is inspired by physics and the transformation of high voltage electricity, which can be transported over vast lengths, into a lower current apt for domestic purposes. Commenting on the works of Franciscan theologian Marquard von Lindau, Burger used the term transformation in order to explain how Marquard, and others, adopted scholastic insights ('high voltage') into a more accessible form of catechesis. See Burger (1999) pp. 51-2. 'High voltage' theology can, for Burger, mean patristic, scholastic, mystic or other, that is transformed to everyday piety. See also Hamm (1999), pp. 17-18. The main text example used by Burger is Marquard's *Dekalogerklärung*. With the idea of transformation, Burger also underlines that the effort of theologians did not necessarily mean a leveling of the message of a decrease of intensity. Sometimes, as in the case of Marquard, it is not a matter of simplification, but of retaining the intellectual level of theology, but at the same time *adjusting* this theology to an audience outside the school environment. Notice how well this idea of transformation applies, as 'high voltage theology' of the schools could, like electric current, be transported vast distances from power stations, i.e., the schools of Cologne, Paris or Strasbourg, and then 'transformed' down and adjusted to the interested layman and woman who had no direct access to the schools. See also Hamm (1999). The term is applicable far beyond this, however, and

These parts demonstrate an inventive approach and an accommodation of practical piety for a relatively wide and religiously active audience. Suso guides his readers in how to practice devotion to the name of Jesus, and in the following part of this chapter he provides a number of prayers and guidance as to how they are to be used in every-day life. These devotional strategies are accessible⁴³ and demonstrate how Suso offers what he saw as pertinent to the readers' individual path to salvation, quite simply, and independent of formal distinctions of religious affiliation.⁴⁴

Previous Research

Despite the impressive diffusion and wide influence of the *Horologium*, it is Suso's German works that have received most attention in recent scholarship. From the past three decades, there is a substantial amount of research on Suso's German works, mostly by German or Swiss scholars with a primary interest in German Literature. Much of this research has been carried out from a point of view of 'German mysticism' or 'Rhineland mysticism.'

We should specify here that by mysticism, we understand a *concept* that is used to describe certain historical texts that attests to a religious attitude or a way of thinking and writing that centers on *God's presence* and on *personal immediacy* with God, whether this immediacy is approached by way of speculative meta-

has been used by Berndt Hamm, Volker Leppin and others in a more general way. As will be seen in Chapter Two of this study, the term might describe, for instance, Suso's way of dealing with some of the more difficult concepts of Eucharist theory.

⁴³ The Disciple introduces the chapter (II, 7) with the following request: "Give us (...) some way that is easy and general" *Watch* 318; *Hor* 594.10 (...) *modum aliquem facilem et tam generalem*.

⁴⁴ This does not mean that the *Horologium* targeted 'everyone' as would, say, an early modern catechism. We may assume that elitist groups who sought an active religious life-style, a type of early precursors to milieus such as the *Devotio moderna*, were among Suso's early readership. The text shows us, nonetheless, that there is good reason to assume a wider audience than simply Dominican friars. Stephen Mossman summarizes a point made by Christoph Burger concerning late medieval popular theologians: "the key distinction is not adoption of a particular rule, but the level of theological knowledge approximately common to all town dwellers with a religious interests who were not ordained or university-educated." Mossman (2010), p. 27.

physics or by emphasis on personal experiences.⁴⁵ Eckhart, Tauler, and Suso have typically been regarded as the ‘three-leaf clover’ of Rhineland mysticism.⁴⁶ Some recent studies have given attention to nuances in the ideas of mystical union and the differences between the radical mysticism of Eckhart and the interpretation and transformation of this thought in Tauler and Suso.⁴⁷ Other approaches have

⁴⁵ This is the understanding of Bernard McGinn (1991), xv-xvi, which is also shared by Berndt Hamm, whose theoretical approaches will be put to use in this study. See, e.g., Hamm (2010a), pp. 205-6. For an overview and discussion of the wide spectrum of modern approaches to mysticism, see McGinn (1991), pp. 265-343. There are indeed many shapes of late medieval mysticism. Within texts that are commonly characterized as mystical we find a speculative mysticism, bridal mysticism, visionary piety that emphasizes raptures and ecstasies and gifts of grace, an ascetic ‘mysticism of suffering’ or a meditative passion mysticism that centers attention to the wounds and blood of Christ. Common to all mysticism is an emphasis on the obliteration of the boundaries between humans and God; such an emphasis on immersion into the divine, moreover may be articulated by means of a speculative metaphysic, or it may be narrated experienced personal encounters, more or less stylized or shaped by traditions of visionary literature; mysticism may or may not be distinctly pronounced in terms of *unio* of the soul with the divine. This understanding of mysticism, which will be employed in this study, is drawn mainly from Berndt Hamm (2007b; 2010a).

As to the historical ‘origins’ of vernacular mysticism in the Rhineland areas, Herbert Grundmann’s study, first published in 1935, is still highly valuable. See also Dinzelsbacher (2007), pp. 224-31. The two ‘types’ of mysticism, Eckhart’s speculative and *unitive* mysticism, and the ‘mysticism of suffering,’ for instance that of Elsbeth von Oye or in other *vitae* in Sister-Books from Dominican female communities, Oetenbach, Töss, or St. Katharinenthal are, in a sense, two sides of the coin. The primary audience of the ‘German mystics’ were precisely the communities that produced the Sister Books. It is generally agreed that the former kind, the Sermons of Eckhart or the *Vita* of Suso, to some extent served as corrections of the latter kind, the ascetic mysticism of the Dominican women or of beguines in the same areas. A study by Langer (1987) considers the ‘Rhineland mysticism,’ and especially the position of Meister Eckhart, as “Auseinandersetzung” and correction of female mysticism in these monasteries. The view of Langer received some criticism for not taking the female sources enough into account. See esp. Peters (1988). For studies on female mysticism in this period, see the contributions in Dinzelsbacher / Bauer (eds.) (1990). Caroline Bynum has also been concerned with female ascetics and mystics in various studies. See, e.g. (1991), chapters II and IV.

⁴⁶ Thus, for instance, the Swiss Church historian Walter Nigg called his book *Das mystische Dreigestirn. Meister Eckhart, Johannes Tauler, Heinrich Seuse* (1988). For an overview on research on Suso’s works, see especially Ruh (1996), pp. 415-16, and McGinn (2005a), pp. 195-241; important studies of central aspects of Suso’s works are found in Haas (1996); For a recent study of Suso from a point of view of mysticism and philosophy, see Enders (1993); See also important contributions in Blumrich / Kaiser (eds.) (1994). A historical context that has been seen as decisive for the shape of Suso’s mystical thought, particularly as seen in his *BdW*, is the aftermath of the condemnation of Eckhart’s theses in 1327 and the challenges of his followers of continuing his legacy without themselves being suspected of heterodoxy. See above n.

⁴⁷ See especially McGinn (2005b); Büchner (2007). See also Grosse (2005), pp. 288-91.

emphasized Suso's passion mysticism, which is often seen as a hallmark of Suso's distinctive 'eckhartianism'.⁴⁸

Scholars have brought us far beyond the assertion once made by Etienne Gilson, that Suso only developed weaker restatements of the thought of Meister Eckhart.⁴⁹ The general interest of most scholars has nonetheless been to study Suso as a mystic within a tradition that is strongly reliant on the thought of Eckhart—albeit as one that gave this legacy a distinctive mark of his own. As we will see in this study, the *Horologium* is practically free of the 'eckhartianism' in which many scholars have been interested. As a consequence of the dominating perspective, the *Horologium* has fallen somewhat outside of the scope.⁵⁰ An example of this is Kurt Ruh, who, in his comprehensive *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, devoted only a few pages to discuss the work. Ruh stated that the *Horologium* belongs to 'mystical literature' only insofar as it adopted mystical parts from the *Bdew*.⁵¹ This view expressed by Kurt Ruh allows us to make a few observations.

First, this view is based upon a rather narrow and pragmatic understanding of mysticism, one that proceeds with a 'canon' of works that are agreed upon as mystical.⁵² From such a view-point, the *Horologium* has been considered as simply a translation of the *Bdew*. A more flexible concept of mysticism, such as that taken up more recently by Berndt Hamm, is more aware of the width of new approaches to spirituality in this period.⁵³ Such an approach enables us to recognize aspects of mysticism also in some of the new parts of the *Horologium*, par-

⁴⁸ See Haas (1996), pp. 125-48; Ulrich (1994).

⁴⁹ See Gilson (1955/89), p. 443 and 758, n.28. See also Chapter One in this study, esp. pp. 66-68.

⁵⁰ There are exceptions. Künzle's introduction and comments to the mentioned edition of the *Horologium* is an important study in its own. A recent study that gives new attention to the *Horologium* is Fenten (2007b). See also Angenendt (1980); and the contributions in Blumrich / Kaiser (eds.) (1994).

⁵¹ See Ruh (1996), pp. 441-5.

⁵² See Ruh (1990), pp. 13-15. Suso's writings have been seen more broadly as part of a body of medieval mystical writers that draw particularly on the tradition of speculative mysticism based on the works of pseudo-Dionysius and typically includes Meister Eckhart, Johannes Tauler, Mechthild von Magdeburg, and Jan van Ruusbroeck.

⁵³ See Hamm (2010a), pp. 205-6; and (2007b).

ticularly of the ‘bridal mysticism,’ but also in other aspects of the work,⁵⁴ and to discuss mysticism in a wider sense, beyond the somewhat limited approach that has hereto dominated historical research on ‘German mystics.’

We need to pay attention to these aspects of mysticism simply because, as we will see, Suso’s ‘recipe’ for a fruitful devotional life is one where notions of God’s presence—and absence—play a significant role. Such tendencies are usually most aptly described by using a concept of mysticism. A careful attention to the nuances that distinguish *Horologium* not only from a German mystical tradition but also, albeit more subtly, from the precursor, the *Bdew*, will allow us to discuss the character of this work in light of recent approaches to mystical literature and piety.

The assertion made by Ruh concerning the *Horologium* in comparison with the *Bdew* also reminds us that there is *more* to this work than mysticism.

Suso’s Horologium and Late Medieval ‘Theology of Piety’

‘Theology of piety’ is an overall concept that was first developed by the German Church historian Berndt Hamm. Hamm’s main idea is that a new *type* of theology emerged in the later part of the Middle Ages, one that includes a wide range of approaches and genres, but with a common practical orientation and a reaction or response to specific religious and societal challenges.⁵⁵ Specific to theology of piety is its orientation, its practical aim, its address to daily life of non-specialists. Such theology employs elements from various traditions—mystic, monastic, scholastic theology—but simplified or transformed and without regard for a specific setting or institutional boundaries.

⁵⁴ McGinn, (2005a), p. 201, comments briefly on the new features of the *Horologium*. Few have followed up and given a full scale study of the bridal mysticism of the *Horologium*, for instance. McGinn tends to regard the *Horologium* as part of Suso’s profile as a mystic more generally, and he thus follows the common interpretation of Suso in an eckhartian tradition. (2005a), pp.197-239, esp. pp. 204-17.

⁵⁵ For a general overview of the study of *Frömmigkeit*, ‘Piety,’ within recent Church history, see Sommer (2004), where the model developed above all by Hamm, as well as some principal objections to it is outlined, especially the objections made by Ulrich Köpf. See also Hamm’s response to Köpf’s objection, (1999), pp. 18-19.

Stephen Mossman, who very recently presented an important study of the works of Franciscan theologian Marquard von Linadu (d. 1392) within a framework of theology of piety, sums up the general idea of this model:

‘Frömmigkeitstheologie’ is (...) a form of late medieval theological literature that, in various ways, seeks to guide the individual to shape the conduct of his life externally and internally. This literature addresses pragmatic issues and does so using forms and structures different to those of the academic world, increasingly distancing itself from the abstract theology and philosophy of the schools, and from the exclusivity of speculative mysticism.”⁵⁶

With this theory, new light has been shed on theological works that had long been regarded as somewhat intellectually feeble and stagnated or unoriginal and without direction. With the theoretical concept of a ‘theology of piety,’ scholars, Hamm and others, have sought to explain how theologians in the later medieval and early modern period responded to a society of increased literacy, new opportunities for education, for new forms of lay religious participation, in short a society that had grown *complex* and that also, importantly, was troubled by religious uncertainties and fear.⁵⁷ In such a climate, authors of a new theology provided a ‘total’ alternative, a means of concentration toward some elements of piety that were seen as directly useful for the individual in her daily life.

A concept that describes a main tendency within theology of piety is “Normative Zentrierung,” a centering on a few themes that were seen as beneficial to the individual’s religious formation. This centering also entailed a discarding of unnecessary hindrances and distractions.⁵⁸ With this new type of theology, elements from ascetic, mystical, scholastic, or patristic traditions were molded into an accessible type of literature that guided people toward a pious *praxis*.⁵⁹

Mossman, in his summary, mentions two primary ‘fields’ that theologians of piety sought distance from: philosophically oriented theology and speculative

⁵⁶ Mossman (2010) p. 30

⁵⁷ Hamm, cited in Mossman (2010), p. 32-3; for religious anxiety in this period, see Dinzelsbacher (1996) and Grosse (1994).

⁵⁸ See Hamm (1999), pp. 21-5, and (2004), pp. 1-49; see also Mossman (2010), p. 32.

⁵⁹ See Hamm (1999), pp. 11-13.

mysticism.⁶⁰ In the course of this study, we shall observe that this is exactly what Suso does in his *Horologium sapientiae*. We may also add another aspect that we have already observed: the high-effort asceticism seen in sources from some mystically oriented milieus is another tenet of ‘specialized’ religiosity that does not apply to a broader audience. Yet, ‘distance’ from specialized forms of theology or devotion does not always describe accurately what occurs in this literature. Indeed, Suso distances himself from academic and philosophically oriented theology, but he also wants to *retain* elements that were important in such an environment. We recall from the story of Amandus above that Suso wants the readers to achieve the same fervent longing as the protagonist of the story. The difference is in the *means* that are offered for this purpose. This may serve for us as an example of the pragmatic *adjustment* of theological or devotional elements that characterizes theology of piety, and a reminder of how such approaches operate across institutional boundaries.

When we employ here a somewhat different model than has usually been done in studies of Suso’s works in a tradition of Rhineland mysticism, this does not mean that we are not interested in mysticism. On the contrary, throughout this study, we will return to the question what kind of mysticism might be said to constitute the spiritual instructions of the *Horologium*. As suggested above, mysticism is very often an element in late medieval ‘popular’ theology. What characterizes the mysticism that is usually seen within this type of popular theology, however, is that it is significantly ‘transformed’ compared to the well-known sources of Rhineland mysticism.⁶¹ This study will show that the spirituality outlined and accommodated in the *Horologium*, its ‘democratized mysticism’ and the easily accessed means of spiritual relief and ‘grace mediation,’ can be seen as more wide reaching than the *Bdew*, which by comparison seems to presuppose

⁶⁰ Hamm, (1999), pp. 9-10, has adopted a term that was developed by Walter Sparr, the idea of a “crisis of rationality” (*Rationalitätskrise*), and applied it to the context that theologians of piety reacted against, namely theological endeavors as it was practiced in the new universities at this time, which was perceived of by the theological authors in question as essentially unfruitful, if not potentially harmful, for a good pious lifestyle. Hamm (1999), p. 18, sums up: “Zur mitte der ‘doctrina christiana’ wird die rechte ‘vita christiana’.” For another recent application of the theory, see Ulrike Treutsch’s study, (2011), esp. p. 289.

⁶¹ See above p. 17 n. with references.

familiarity with speculative mysticism, and thus a limited context of a susceptible audience. In this study we will see, through several comparisons, that a main characteristic of the *Horologium sapientiae* is distance from speculative language about *Unio mystica*. The new direction taken by Suso in this work should be seen as a conscious effort of popularization and adaption to a relatively wide audience compared to that of his German works. Bridal mysticism in the *Horologium* is a theme that is not explored in depth in this study, but this is another important way in which mystical impulses were recast in the period that gave rise to theology of piety.⁶²

The overall concept of theology of piety was first developed for the analysis of fifteenth and sixteenth-century theology that immediately preceded the Reformation, that is, theology of a later date than Suso. Hamm refined his theory through his seminal work on theologians such as Johannes von Palz, Girolamo Savonarola and Johannes von Staupitz;⁶³ other scholars have contributed with studies of the theology of Jean Gerson,⁶⁴ held by some as a pioneer of ‘theology of piety.’ Less known figures have been studied with a similar scope, but usually not from as early a period as the first half of the fourteenth century.⁶⁵ However, in a recent study by Stephen Mossman, the model has been extended to include a theology of an earlier date, namely the popular works of Marquard von Lindau, the Franciscan theologian who died in 1392.

That is to say, at the earliest, the concept has been understood to include authors that lived a generation or more later than Suso.⁶⁶ Mossman is, however, categorical when he introduces his study: *Frömmigkeitstheologie* begins with Marquard von Lindau and not before.⁶⁷ Indeed, what theologians of piety did was

⁶² See Hamm (2010a), p. 219-20; see above, n. 54.

⁶³ See Hamm (2004).

⁶⁴ See Burger (1986), and the more recent study by Sven Grosse (1994).

⁶⁵ See for instance Treutsch (2011) on Bernhard von Waging (d. 1472), or Gerrits (1986) on Gerhardt Zerbolt von Zütphen.

⁶⁶ Mossman’s study (2010) of Marquard von Lindau (d. 1392) has been mentioned; Angenendt (2005), pp. 188-91, points to the Vienna school in the late fourteenth century with Heinrich von Langenstein (d. 1397) as a leading figure of early *Frömmigkeitstheologie*. See also Leppin (2007b), pp. 175-79.

⁶⁷ Mossman (2010), p. 35.

not to invent new themes or practices; their effort was one of intensification, reinterpretation, transformation of traditional tenets from scholastic, monastic patristic or mystical theology. We may easily agree with Mossman that the theory cannot be stretched back *ad infinitum* because single features seen in the works of, say, Jean Gerson, may also be observed in earlier sources. There are nonetheless many good reasons to include the *Horologium* in such a model; in it we find not only features, but a whole set of tenets that correspond to this theory, and, importantly, such tenets make a pattern, a tendency and *direction* that is in correspondence with this overall theoretical concept.⁶⁸

A typical tendency in theology of piety is a critical attitude to school theology. This is a topic that makes the theory relevant for studying the *Horologium*; it is particularly in this book that Suso develops a highly critical stance in relation to academic theology, as will be seen on several occasions in this study. Among the new parts found only in the *Horologium* is a memorable vision of the ‘new schools’ and of theologians who are quarreling over irrelevant philosophical ‘subtleties.’ *Qerulositas* is a key (derogatory) term used by Suso to denote fruitless and unnecessary academic efforts, activities that are, emphatically, irrelevant for salvation. The tendency seen in the *Horologium* of comprising a simple practically oriented theology that is explicitly held as “fruitful for salvation”—at the cost of all other approaches—is in line with what Berndt Hamm has asserted as perhaps *the* hallmark of this kind of theology: orientation toward personal salvation, and dismissal of everything that is not seen as helpful or directly relevant for this purpose.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ The concept of theology of piety is, of course, applied in awareness of the fact that society and religious mentality developed and changed during the fourteenth century, and that some tenets of religiosity that the model helps to explore were comparably stronger or more acute in later phases. For instance, some of the issues surrounding Eucharist devotion and theory that Mossman has discovered in Marquard and his contemporaries were indeed more acute and subject to fierce controversy compared to earlier fourteenth century theology. This does not make the primary target of the authors any different. Suso, like Marquard, wanted to face some main challenges on behalf of his audience and provide concrete solutions, and thus steer the audience toward a fruitful personal devotion.

⁶⁹ See some of the criticism of Hamm’s theory, especially from Ulrich Köpf, summarized in Sommer (2004). See also Hamm (1999). Similarly, we might add that this is not to say that eternal salvation is not an issue in Suso’s other works. However, in line with the assertions of

When we consider Suso as an early contributor to a new type of theology in the later Middle Ages, this needs to be specified: Importantly, we shall consider his ideas *as they appear in the Horologium*, and not in his works as a whole. For several reasons, the model of ‘theology of piety’ is less apt to explore other works by Suso. For instance, it appears that Suso’s *Vita*, unlike the *Horologium*, was specifically addressed to the demands of women who lived under enclosure and who seem to have been advanced ascetics and susceptible to ideas of speculative mysticism. The *Buchlein der Warheit* and the final and distinctly speculative parts of the *Vita* suggest a primary concern for the interpretation of eckhartian ideas and of defending the orthodoxy of this thought against accusations of Free Spirit heresy.⁷⁰ A careful comparison will show that there are interesting differences in terms of mysticism even between works as similar as the *Bdew* and the *Horologium* that makes the latter work more responsive to the interpretative model that is proposed here.⁷¹

We said that theology of piety should be seen as some late medieval theologians’ response to a society in rapid change and to sentiments of religious uncertainty. We will see several examples of this throughout our study of the *Horologi-*

Hamm about *Frömmigkeitstheologie*, in the *Horologium*, I offer, this is the major theme, which every part of the edification is put in the service of. In other words, there are in this work no ‘special problems’ of spiritual life that are not directly linked to this overall issue: what is fruitful for salvation. Everything is integrated by an overall idea of guiding souls safely from sin and toward eternal blessedness. This is a distinct difference from, say, the *BdW* or the *Vita*.

⁷⁰ See Lerner (1971/2007); Grundmann (1961/2002); McGinn (2005a), pp. 200; 218. With the character the *namelese wilde*, the “Nameless Wild One”, who appears in the dialogue in the *BdW*, Suso aimed to exemplify an unheard-of interpretation of eckhartian thought and to establish an orthodox mysticism.

⁷¹ The diverse reception history of Suso’s works is in line with our observations. The *Exemplar*, which includes the *Vita*, the *BfB* and the *BdW*, lived on mostly within monastic circles, whereas the *Horologium* was more widely transmitted. As mentioned it was particularly popular among the new semi-monastic groups that were to emerge such as the *Devotio moderna* especially in the Low Countries. See Breyer (1984); Suso was in the latter part of the Middle Ages among the most widely read spiritual authors in this area, and this popularity is mainly due to the *Horologium sapientiae*. See Wolf, “Seuse und die Niederlande...,” cited in Byrn (1981) p. 71; See also Künzle (1977), pp. 285-6. In *Devotio moderna* circles the *Horologium* soon attained the status of a classic. In a list of books recommended by Gert Groote, a founding father of this movement, *Horologium* is the only work written after ca. 1250. The same is seen in a similar list of ‘approved works’ made by Florentinus Radewijns, another key figure in the history of this movement. It seems likely that Suso’s castigation of school theology is a tenet that appealed to such spiritual reformers, whose anti-intellectualism could be fierce. See Klinkenberg (1974).

um. To sum up these preliminary remarks and this outline of our study, we may let the work of current interest speak for itself. In chapter three in Book II, Suso's Disciple addresses divine Wisdom:

The world is full of different teachings. There are thousand ways of living, 'one this way, another that.' There are so many books about vices and virtues, treating them with great authority, there are booklets dealing with most subtle questions and various propositions, that this short life would end before one had managed to look them all through, let alone studied them. Who could number all the works on logic, the natural sciences, history, moral philosophy and divinity, all the treatises, the commentaries, old and new, handbooks of elements, anthologies, individual treatises and summas, with which the whole surface of the world is overwhelmed as with an encroaching flood? (...) I ask that I may be given out of it all the briefest formula of perfection (...) ⁷²

This is from a chapter of Book II of the *Horologium* (II, 3) where Suso deals with asceticism and detachment from disturbing surroundings. Suso portrays the Disciple's 'discovery' of an ancient source, where he finds the principles for good simple living that he seeks: the source that he finds is the anecdotes about the Desert Father Arsenius, Suso's favorite 'philosopher.' From this work Suso draws an idea of a concentrated 'salutary doctrine,' which stands out as a direct contrast to the contemporary increasingly complex and wrongheaded theology of the new universities and schools. The parts that follow from this passage show an effort of concentration against a backdrop of complexity and uncertainty, which is something that we will observe on several occasions in the following readings.

New Readings

Three main themes have been selected for this study: 1) *tribulatio* and the idea of enduring hardships and adversities; 2) devotion to the Eucharistic Sacrament, and, finally, 3) death and death preparation and eschatology. There are several reasons

⁷² Watch 258-9; Hor. 540.22-541.7 *Mundus diversitate doctrinarum repletus est. Mille sunt modi vivendi, 'unus quidem sic, alius vero sic.' Tot sunt codices de vitiis et virtutibus magistraliter tractantes, tot sunt quaterni quaestiones subtilissimas et propositiones diversas pertractantes, ut prius vita brevis deficiat, quam omnia studere, sed necdum perlegere contingat. Quis dinumerare posset omnia rationalia, naturalia, historialia, moralia ac divina: Omnia scripta, cuncta commenta nova et vetera, elementationes, compilationes, singulosque tractatus ac summas, quibus universa superficies terrae tamquam fluvio inundante irrigata est?*

for studying these particular themes. Most importantly, these are the themes that concern Suso most in the book. “The tribulations of the elect” or “the tribulations of God’s beloved friends,” is a central idea Suso’s *Horologium*. The ideal of *tribulatio* also brings us at close range to Suso’s *passion piety*; as will be seen there is a close relationship between the idea of sustaining hardships and of following Christ. The *tribulatio* study will explore how the ideal of suffering, an ideal with deep monastic roots, is both intensified and reinterpreted so as to be adapted to Christian existence in the world more generally.

The Eucharist is another major theme in medieval piety and theology, and this makes comparative outlooks interesting. Eucharist devotion was clearly of high importance for Suso; the Eucharist chapter is by far the most elaborate chapter in the *Horologium*. We shall focus attention on some main issues: the correct *attitude* to the sacrament, the correct *understanding* of it, and the best strategies for encountering some of the difficulties that surrounded this particular rite. Within much late medieval mysticism the Eucharist holds a special position as a way of “departure” for unique experience. This aspect of mysticism has received some attention by scholars quite recently. Comparable sources and recent approaches are easily at hand and will give us opportunity to outline the profile of the *Horologium* in terms of mystical piety by way of comparative approaches.

The main themes of this study have been given some attention previously, but mostly as seen in Suso’s German works and mainly from a perspective of Rhineland mysticism. This will give us opportunities to compare and observe the unique profile of the *Horologium*. A main tendency in *Horologium*, it will be seen, is that the speculation about the soul in immediacy with God in a mystical sense is significantly toned down. But far from being a watered-out version of more intensely mystical works, the *Horologium* displays a shift of attention toward other and more pertinent issues.

The following study will show us a religiosity *under pressure*. A main task will be to demonstrate how Suso responded to unease, anxiety about sinfulness, feelings of spiritual inadequacy and even outright fear that appears to have trou-

bled many religious minds in this period.⁷³ Suso aimed to provide ways and means that could improve the situation by accommodating an accessibility of divine reconciliation and grace. The pressure that the *Horologium* reflects is, above all, eschatological. Suso wanted to provide relief, but he also wanted to encourage *awareness* of what it meant to be living in preparation for the next worlds. In doing so, he goes into confrontation with the very sources of religious fear; with intense visions—of the horrible death of an unprepared man, of purgatorial suffering, of the unspeakable (yet vividly portrayed) torments of Hell, or of the incredibly angry God-judge—Suso wanted to prepare his readers for the worst. Only thus can the devout person steer clear of life's many pitfalls and reach the goal safely. Next to the frightful images of dangers that befall the impious are, of course, also promises of eternal glory and final *visio* reserved for the elect, the friends of God, who are in this world as “lambs among wolves” and who do their best to persevere and seek the means of salvation.

A few remarks on the use of sources, translations and secondary literature. Full quotes from Suso's work are given in English in the main text and in Latin in the footnotes. I use Edmund Colledge's translation of the *Horologium*, entitled *Wisdom's Watch upon the Hours*. This translation is referred to in the footnotes with the short title *Watch* and page number. The short title *Hor.*, with pages and line numbers, is used for Pius Künzle's 1977 edition of *Horologium sapientiae*. Künzle's extensive introduction to this edition and comments to the text are referred to as Künzle (1977). For Suso's German works I use Karl Bihlmeyer's edition (1907/61). I use the conventional short titles for Suso's Middle High German works, such as *Bdew* for *Buchlein der ewigen weisheit* and *Bdw* for *Buchlein der Wahrheit*, but *Vita* for Suso's *Leben*, or “Life”. Frank Tobin's English translation of Suso's MHD works is referred to in the footnotes as *Exemplar*.

Lists of Suso's works and other medieval sources that are used are found in the bibliography section at the conclusion of the study. Complete bibliographical references to editions of medieval works, translations, and secondary literature are

⁷³ See Mossman (2010), pp. 32-34 with further references.

given in the final literature list.

Chapter One: The Tribulations of the Elect

Why must the elect, Gods friends, endure so many tribulations in this world? This is one of the main questions raised by Suso in Book One of the *Horologium sapientiae*. Two extensive chapters in the first book (nine and thirteen) are devoted in full to the idea of *tribulatio* or *adversitas* as a path of pious life, how to deal with tribulation, why hardships afflict the *electi* and, importantly, what are the benefits of enduring tribulations. In addition to these two primary ‘tribulation chapters,’ this issue appears in other parts of the book, especially in the parts about Christ’s passion (I, 3 and 15). Throughout the dialogues on *tribulatio* or *adversitas* (the words are used interchangeably) we find reflections on Christian existence in the world, on identification with Christ and imitation of Christ, on sin and satisfaction, and on the afterlife and God’s judgment.

In this first part of our study we will observe that *tribulatio* is for Suso a defining aspect of true inner piety, and that the idea of tribulation also entails a specific interpretation of Christ’s sufferings. Moreover, we will discuss Suso’s teaching on tribulations in relation to another primary aspect of the *Horologium*, namely eschatology and especially the notion of God’s strict judgment over sinners in the Afterlife.

As we proceed we shall be informed by the general theory of a ‘theology of piety’ in the later Middle Ages, as was outlined in the introduction above. With this theory, attention has been drawn to development within this period’s theology: adaption and concentration toward carefully selected themes in works that addressed a relatively wide audience. An important tendency in much of this ‘new theology’ has been observed, namely an effort to dispose of everything that was not beneficial for personal salvation, be it dry academic disputes, ‘worldly pur-

suits' of whatever type, or unnecessarily harsh asceticism.⁷⁴ In line with this theory we shall consider the idea of *tribulatio* in the *Horologium* as a generic term, an overall concept by which Suso attempts to concentrate devotional effort and reflection according to what is profitable (*utile*) for salvation. With his *tribulatio* ideal, I shall try to demonstrate, Suso provides a 'device' of Christian self-identification and inner moral refinement, put in the service of shaping everyday piety for a relatively wide audience, in line with the explicit intention of his work.

A foremost interest throughout this study is also to establish the mystical teaching in the *Horologium*. The Middle High German equivalent of *tribulatio* is *leiden*; this term has been seen by several scholars as another articulation of the key idea in Rhineland mysticism: inner detachment (*gelassenheit* or *abegescheidenheit*) as a way to unite with God *via* the suffering Christ. In short, *leiden* in Suso's works has been regarded as a mystical concept within a distinct framework of eckhartianism.⁷⁵ Is this also the case for the ideal of *tribulatio* in the *Horologium*? Is it a mystical concept? This is a question we will return to in the course of this chapter.

I. A 'Sum' of Devotion

In the introduction to this study we read the "strange and noteworthy" story of Amandus, who engraved the letters of Christ's name, IHC, on his own chest.⁷⁶ Since *tribulatio*, among other things, can mean 'suffering', it is natural to seek the relationship between *tribulatio* in the *Horologium* and the rather brutal asceticism that is so often reflected in literature from the later Middle Ages—and in sources from Suso's vicinity in particular.⁷⁷ The use of the Amandus story in the *Horolo-*

⁷⁴ Hamm (1999). pp 16-17; Burger (1986); see the introduction above.

⁷⁵ Ulrich (1994), 129, 133-8; 138: "Leiden ist der wahre Weg zu Gelassenheit, zur Gottessohnschaft im Eckhartischen Sinne."

⁷⁶ See the introduction to this study.

⁷⁷ Such accounts are, of course, highly stylized, but at the same time there can be little doubt that such practices did occur. There is a substantial amount of recent research on this topic of asceticism in the later Middle Ages. See, for instance, various contributions by Caroline

gium is interesting. We saw that Suso warns explicitly against exercises such as in which Amandus engaged himself. The reader is referred to an entirely different strategy, which does not involve asceticism at all. Suso encourages his audience to have devotion to the name of Jesus by writing down this name on pieces of cloth and keeping this with them, and to stimulate inner devotion to Christ in a way that is safe and easy.

Now, this story is not really about *tribulatio* at all; it is part of a chapter that deals with prayers and simple exercises for those who want to pursue their own 'spiritual renewal.' However, the story is characteristic to the profile of this work as a whole and can provide us a hint as to how the idea of *tribulatio* should be understood. The story of Amandus is presented in a way that explicitly rejects self-inflicted suffering. Seen against a background of a 'piety of suffering,' the *Horologium* conveys different strategies of devotion. The main point is not the stabbing of the chest, but the inner fervor and love of God that Amandus achieves; this can be attained, Suso insists, by other means.

Although *tribulatio* can be translated as suffering, it does not mean the type of self-mortification and brutal asceticism so often seen, for instance, in the Dominican Sister-Books. The passages that deal with *tribulatio* in Suso's book, and there are many of them, do not particularly address asceticism at all. This should not be taken to mean that Suso rejects asceticism as such, which was a fundamental tenet of Christian life in this time, and not only for monks and nuns, but for people who sought a strict life of devotion independent of formal religious affiliation.⁷⁸ Suso conveys an ideal of asceticism and correction of the body, to steer away from improper delights, and to attain an inner 'purity of heart' (*puritas cordis*), an ideal that goes back to the desert fathers, and especially John Cassian, and is almost universally present in medieval monastic culture.⁷⁹ However, im-

Bynum, Kieckhefer (1984), Vauchez (2005), and recently Tinsley(2010), who gives specific attention to Suso and Elsbeth Stagel and their take on asceticism.

⁷⁸ See Burger (1999), p. 54. ascetic rigor in the fashion of monks and nuns was expected also from lay people who actively sought out a religious lifestyle.

⁷⁹ Asceticism is the main theme in Suso's 'Arsenius chapter', the third chapter of Book Two of the *Horologium*, *Watch* 258-65; *Hor.* 540-47, which is more in line with the traditional idea of outer rigor and exercises for the purpose of inner freedom, as expressed also by the found-

portantly for us, this theme is not raised in the parts of Suso's book that deal with *tribulatio*.⁸⁰

What, then, does *tribulatio* or *adversitas* mean for Suso in the *Horologium*? Although tribulations are said to afflict God's friends very often, it is not always easy to establish the specific meaning of the term. It can refer to a variety of things; very often *tribulatio* is used to describe the challenges that truly devout people have to endure in the midst of impious and even hostile surroundings, as we will see below. Sometimes hardships of devotional life are suggested by way of allegory, such as the attacks of wild animals⁸¹ or even bad weather;⁸² it can mean the loss of a dear friend.⁸³ Importantly, *tribulatio* can also refer to a feeling of absence of God and to deep states of 'inner suffering,' frustration and deep sorrow (*tristitia inordinata*), close in meaning to what we today would call depression.⁸⁴ Difficulties of devotional engagement because of insensitivity and "hardness of heart" (*duritia*) are interpreted as *tribulatio*.⁸⁵ Specific types of tribulation may thus be distinguished, and we shall comment on some of these, but we should also notice that very often the term *tribulatio* is used in an unspecified sense. It is used as a generic term that encompasses a great *variety* of hardships that are parts of a true Christian life. Tribulations, it is said, do not afflict everyone equally cruel.⁸⁶

ing fathers of the mendicant orders, see Vauchez (2005), p. 340, than the severe asceticism seen in the Sister-Books, and also in Suso's *Vita*. Asceticism was indeed a difficult issue for theologians of this period, and the *Vita* and the Sister-Books testify to an ongoing negotiation of this theme of the benefits and the limits of bodily rigor. For asceticism in Suso's works, including the *Horologium*, the reader may consult a recent study by Sandra Fenten, *Mystik und Körperlichkeit* (2007b); for the classic ideal of asceticism and inner freedom, see also Knuuttila (2004), pp. 149-50 with references. See also *Hor.* II, 6, p. 587.4-7.

⁸⁰ An example of a work that, unlike the *Horologium*, relates the idea of *tribulatio* to asceticism is the anonymous treatise *De duodecim utilitatibus tribulationum*, "On the twelve benefits of tribulation," see Tinsley (2010), pp. 23-32, esp. pp. 31-2. According to Tinsley this was "the most popular treatise on the spiritual benefits of suffering that the Later Middle Ages produced." An edition of the treatise with comments is found in Auer (1952), pp. 1-71.

⁸¹ *Watch* 151; *Hor.* 450.7-16.

⁸² *Watch* 187-8; *Hor.* 480.26-481.17.

⁸³ *Watch* 186; *Hor.* 479.31-480.1.

⁸⁴ See esp. *Watch* 186-8; *Hor.* 479.27-481.17.

⁸⁵ See below, pp. 69-73.

⁸⁶ *Watch* 150; *Hor.* 449.21-3 *Non de omnibus loquor. 'Tu scis domine', quos ad hoc opus tam strenuum elegeris.*

A key formula is that “God afflicts his elect in many different ways (*mille modis*).”⁸⁷

The following formulation is typical of the *tribulatio* parts of Book I. The life of the elect, it seems, is fundamentally conditioned by hardships:

For the first steps of those who walk to you, the first pages of those reading you, the first gift and jewel for those loving you is this: “Son, when you come to the service of God, stand in fear, and prepare your soul for temptation.” (Eccl 2.1) Well does he say “for temptation,” truly for misery and tribulation, so that in every day of your soldiering you will be in conflict and in battle, and the fortune you wish for will seldom or never smile to you.⁸⁸

In this passage it is the Disciple who speaks to his dialogue partner Eternal Wisdom—who, as we know, is also Christ. The quotation from Sirach is used to convey temptation, which is here interpreted as “misery and tribulation”, as a hallmark of the life with God, and also to speak of the importance of a *conversion* into this life, a personal ‘reform’.⁸⁹ In this condense passage a number of key metaphors are joined together in order to articulate a ‘sum’ of devotion. Tribulation is soldiering and battle; it is a *path*, a way to God; it is a school, a process of learning (“the first pages reading you”), where tribulation and misery are the beginning, the first steps toward insight. Moreover, tribulations are seen as a “gift and jewel,” which suggests again that they are mediations from God, a good that comes from heaven and is conveyed to humans in this life: it is a form of divine *presence* in the world.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ *Watch* 289; *Hor.* 569.26; cf. 449.24-5 *multipliciter flagellati*; 450.30 *haec multiformia mala*: Or, as the title of chapter nine reads (*Hor.* I, 9): “Why Divine Wisdom Permits Those Dear to Her (*caros suos*) to Be Afflicted in So many Ways in This World (*in hoc mundo permittit tam multipliciter tribulari*).” *Watch* 149; *Hor.* 448.6-7.

⁸⁸ *Watch* 150; *Hor.* 449.16-21 *Primus namque passus accidentium ad te, prima pagina te tegentium, primum exenium ac iocale te diligentium est istud: ‘Fili accedens ad servitutem Dei, sta in timore, et praepera animam tuam ad tentationem.’ Bene dicit: ‘ad tentationem’, vere ad miseriam et tribulationem, ita ut cunctis diebus militiae tuae sis in conflictu et certamine, et ut fortuna tibi raro aut numquam optata arrideat.*

⁸⁹ See Ulrich (1994), p. 128. Suso does not use the term ‘reform’ himself.

⁹⁰ A direct parallel to this particular metaphor is found in Suso’s account of Christ and the Passion as a book, as we shall see in the discussion of tribulation and Christ’s passion below. This is especially coined in *Watch* 87; *Hor.* I, 3: the elements of spiritual life, turning away from the world, accepting “with rejoicing every tribulation,” enduring patiently “wrongs put upon you,” etc. mortify the desires of the flesh, etc: these elements are the elements, the “first beginnings which

Suso's use of the text from Sirach also shows that he understands tribulations to be a form of *tentatio*, "temptation." *Tentatio* and *tribulatio* are often used almost interchangeably in medieval theology.⁹¹ Theologians sought to explain the meaning of temptations or tribulations and some provided treatises that systematized their spiritual benefits.⁹² The Egyptian Desert Fathers, with their prototypical life of solitude and their battles against demonic temptations on their path toward spiritual perfection, were an important source for late medieval thought about *tentatio*.⁹³ A widespread thought in medieval theological reflection on *tentatio* was that through them God is testing (*probare*) humans.⁹⁴ Peter Lombard, in his *Sentences*, pointed to three main aspects of temptations: that God *teaches* man through temptations; and humans *learn* what they do not know; and lastly that the devil is tempting humans through *tentatio*.

In the *Horologium*, as seen above, these terms, *tribulatio* and *tentatio*⁹⁵ can be used interchangeably, but *tribulatio* or *adversitas* are the preferred terms. As he says, "Eternal Wisdom, is accustomed to try her lovers (*suos amatores ... probare*) through worldly tribulations,"⁹⁶ and he praises tribulation "which gives wisdom" and "attracts circumspection."⁹⁷ Suso is usually in line with the common conceptions; his *tribulatio* concept has attained the first two meanings of *tentatio* according to Lombard, that is, the 'testing' and the 'educational' function. With

Eternal Wisdom hands on to you and all her other lovers, which are incised, as you can see, in this open book which is my crucified body." *Watch* 87.

⁹¹ Since late antiquity, *tentatio* had been regarded as a main tenet of advanced Christian life-style. A basic narrative that underlies and forms the associative background for medieval discussions of *tentatio* is the temptations of Christ in the desert (cf. Mt 4.1-11). See art. 'Anfechtung' in TRE 2, 687-95.

⁹² See for instance the mentioned treatise, *De duodecim utilitatibus tribulationum*.

⁹³ See Constable (1996), p.136; Dinzelbacher (1996), pp. 27-78, esp. pp. 39-45.

⁹⁴ Peter Lombard, in his *Sentences* (IV), gives three important aspects of temptations: that God *teaches* man through temptations; and humans *learn* what they do not know; and lastly that the devil is tempting humans through *tentatio*. See TRE 2, p. 691.

⁹⁵ See *Watch* 150; *Hor.* 449.19-22.

⁹⁶ See, e.g., *Watch* 188; *Hor.* 481.20 ... *aeternae sapientiae suos amatores temporalibus consuevit tribulationibus probare, et probatos sibi in amicitia copulare*. Petrus Berchorious (d. 1362), exegete and contemporary of Suso, stated: *Per tribulationis nos tentat ut probet, si firmi et stabiles maneamus*, quoted in TRE 2, p. 691.

⁹⁷ The treatise *De duodecim utilitatibus tribulationum* states similarly that tribulations bring about self knowledge; the fourth benefit of tribulation in this treatise is *illuminet cor hominis ad cognitionem sui ipsius, in quo consistit conditionis humanae perfectio*, Auer (ed.) (1952), p. 81 (PL 207.995C); In Suso: See *Bdew* 251.15.

regard to the last of the three aspects named by Lombard, *tentatio seductionis*, the temptations of the devil, Suso's teaching is somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand tribulations are praised for their ability to drive out such temptations (*repellit tentationes*).⁹⁸ *Tentatio*, therefore, is associated with demonic presence, whereas *tribulatio* drives out such demonic forces. However, we also see an emphasis on the devil's presence in the world through the widespread religious decay and that these forces can turn against the devout person in the sense of "worldly tribulations." Tribulations, on a few occasions, have a demonic aspect, although they are, as a general rule, sent from God. Like various spiritual exercises throughout the history of monasticism, tribulations have an 'anti-demonic aim' as they provide *protection* from dangerous and destructive forces.⁹⁹ The main line of thought is, nonetheless, that endurance of tribulations has a cultivating effect and that it increases virtue, especially the key virtues *patientia* and *humilitas*, and serves as a protection from sin. This ambiguous use of the term only shows how wide and flexible it is. Suso's main point is always that by sustaining tribulations, whatever they might be, the individual grows and improves spiritually.

Since it has the effect of strengthening virtue, tribulation provides a remedy against the risks of worldly ambition (*ambitio saeculi*),¹⁰⁰ worldly love, and earthly and bodily delights.¹⁰¹ In short, we find with the concept of *tribulatio* a teaching of moral refinement.¹⁰² This refinement, in turn, provides protection against all types of deviation from the true path to salvation, which is always a main point for Suso throughout the *Horologium*. In chapter thirteen, in Wisdom's response to the 'problem of tribulation,' that is, why God allows tribulations to afflict his friends,

⁹⁸ This is also one of the benefits of tribulations also in *De duodecim utilitatibus tribulationis*. PL 207.991 B-D. / ed. Auer (1952). For temptation in this sense of *tentatio seductionis*, see *Hor.* I, 1, where the disciple as a spiritual beginner is tempted by the devil (*humani generis inimicum*) to give up his devotional life and give in to worldly delights, *Watch* 67-8; *Hor.* 375.23-376.10.

⁹⁹ See Dinzelbacher (1996), p. 44. See also Tinsley (2010).

¹⁰⁰ See Fenten (2007b).

¹⁰¹ The servant in the beginning of his spiritual life, was about to convince himself by "subtle arguments" to leave love of God for *amorem mundi* (*Quadam vice, cum subtilissimis argumentationibus ad amorem mundi et Dei desertionem urgeretur... amoris impatiens*) and to "...join the Epicureans' sect and to yearn for the peace of the flesh," *Watch* 69-70; *Hor.* 377-78.

¹⁰² For comments on the strong moralizing tendency found in much "interiorized" piety in the later medieval period, see Angenendt et al (1995), pp. 60-61; see below, pp. 60-93.

it is referred to Genesis: “man’s thoughts are prone to evil from his youth.” Humans are in need of spiritual renewal and divine correction.¹⁰³ He/she needs to rise out of the entanglements of this world and turn away from self will—by accepting divine afflictions sent by God, and thus appropriating God’s will. God’s will is manifested through corrections that come with *tribulatio*.

The Fruits of Tribulation

The Disciple often complains that he is constantly afflicted with hardships and that he is too weak to sustain them. Why should he suffer adversities? Tribulations, so the answer goes, are harsh but fruitful—a “gift and jewel.” Eternal Wisdom reminds the disciple that the right endurance of tribulations means to be on the path to salvation (*via spinis tribulationum*).¹⁰⁴ The gift metaphor occurs similarly in the Disciple’s vision of heaven (I, 11), where it points to the ‘marriage of salvation’ and to the bridal gift that symbolizes divine election and final salvation.¹⁰⁵ In the voice of Eternal Wisdom, in chapter thirteen: “I who have created all things out of nothing bring unforeseen tribulations from anywhere at all upon my elect, lest they be deprived of this benefit, which is so great to them.”¹⁰⁶ In the same chapter, we find a long praise to the many benefits (*utile*) of tribulations.¹⁰⁷

Tribulation is the nurse of humility, the teacher of patience, the guardian of virginity, the bringer of everlasting felicity. Tribulation is considered to bring such well-being that it can hardly be that anyone will hide himself when it sprinkles its goodness around, whether he belongs to the beginners or to the proficient or even to the perfect. It takes away the rust of sins, it promotes the growth of virtues, and it confers the fullness of graces. What can be of greater use than this most precious treasure? For it takes away sin, it shortens purgatory, it repels temptations, it extinguishes carnality, it renews the spirit, it strengthens hope, it enlivens the

¹⁰³ Gen 8.21; *Watch* 193; *Hor.* 486.3-4.

¹⁰⁴ *Watch* 193 ; *Hor.* 486.4 *saepianda est via electorum spinis tribulationum*.

¹⁰⁵ See below, Chapter Three, pp. 250-55.

¹⁰⁶ *Watch* 198; *Hor.* 490.19-21 *Ego, qui cuncta creavi ex nihilo, tribulationes improvisas undecumque super electos meos induco, ne eorum immenso priventur beneficio*.

¹⁰⁷ Entitled *Quam utile sit servo dei in hoc mundo multas sustinere tribulationes*, *Hor.* 487.1-2; *Watch* 184 “How Profitable It Can Be for a Servant of God to Endure Many Tribulations in This World.”

countenance, it brings peace of conscience and it offers unending fullness of inward joys. It is the health-giving draft, the plant more healing than all those of the earthly paradise. It does indeed chastise the corruptible body, but it nourishes the immortal soul. A devout soul grows well fed on tribulation, as the roses and lilies are made fecund by celestial dew. It gives wisdom, it attracts circumspection, and it makes a clumsy man more adroit.¹⁰⁸

This extensive catalogue of the benefits of “worldly tribulations” is typical for Suso’s style. He does not give a systematic account of a fixed number of points concerning the theme, as is seen in some contemporary texts.¹⁰⁹ Instead, Suso’s Wisdom provides long poetic praises of the benefits that come to those who walk this path. Again, we see that tribulatio is a ‘total concept,’ a means of articulating a sum of everything that is good and beneficial, and a path to salvation.¹¹⁰

As in the previous passage, we see that tribulations are praised for their ‘educational’ ability. Tribulations lead to wisdom (*tribuit sapientiam*). As Bernard of Clairvaux praised his *magistra experientia*, Suso here presents tribulations as a personified *doctrinx*, a female teacher for spiritual beginners.¹¹¹ Tribulations personified as *doctrinx* corresponds to Suso’s understanding of Christ and the passion as a book.¹¹² For him the true form of education is a totality of reflection and experience, a “spiritual philosophy,” *philosophia spiritualis*. To be afflicted and tested is a process of inner cultivation and of attaining experiential knowledge;

¹⁰⁸ Watch 197; Hor. 489.27-490.11 ...est nutrix humilitatis, doctrinx patientiae, custos virginitatis, comparatrix aeternae felicitates. Tribulatio habita est adeo salutifera, ut vix sit, qui ab eius se abscondat bonitatis aspergine, sive sit de incipientium numero vel proficientium seu etiam perfectorum. Rubiginem aufert peccatorum, incrementa praestat virtutum et ubertatem confert gratiarum. Quid hoc thesauro pretiosissimo utilius? Ipsa namque peccata tollit, purgatorium minuit, repellit tentationes, exstinguit carnalitates, spiritum renovat, spem roborat, vultum exhilarat, conscientiae affert serenitatem, et internorum gaudiorum continuam praestat ubertatem. Ipsa est potio sanativa, herba salutifera super omnes herbas paradisi terrestres. Corpus corruptibile castigat quidem, sed animam vegetat immortalem. Anima devota saginatur tribulatione, sicut rosae ac lilia fecundantur caelesti rore. Ipsa tribuit sapientiam, adducit circumspectionem, et hominem inexpertum exercitiationem facit.

¹⁰⁹ See Grosse (1994), who speaks of the ‘encyclopedic’ consolation books of this time, especially that of Johannes Dambach. See next section.

¹¹⁰ See also Watch 193; Hor. 486.4 *Via spinis tribulationum*.

¹¹¹ See Bernard’s *Sermones super Cantica Canticorum* 6.

¹¹² For the *liber vitae* metaphor, which also is an example of Suso’s debt to Bonaventure, see Haas (1993) pp. 97-8 with further references. See also recently Mossman (2010), p. 121, who finds the same concept in Marquard von Lindau. For Bonaventure’s influence on Suso, see Ruh (1996), p. 459.

tribulations provide an ability of discernment, which in turn enables recognition of the divine origin of the tribulations themselves.¹¹³ A difficulty for inexperienced religious beginners is, namely, to recognize tribulations as coming from Eternal Wisdom, that is, to understand that God permits afflictions upon his loved ones and that this is actually beneficial.¹¹⁴

In this list of tribulations' many benefits we observe that the eschatological dimension of this teaching is in the foreground. Tribulation is said to reduce Purgatory (*purgatorium minuit*). This is an interesting aspect of the *tribulatio* teaching that we shall comment on below. We also observe that the "corruptible body" that is chastised by tribulations is contrasted to the "immortal soul," which is nourished. This is indeed a statement that might suggest a moderate asceticism, but it can just as well mean illness or injuries.¹¹⁵

The contrasting formula of the body and the soul, the final and the eternal, is not uncommon in the often antithetic language in monastic traditions of the Middle Ages.¹¹⁶ As is suggested on several occasions in the *Horologium*, tribulations are understood as a divinely bestowed *opportunity* to sustain hardships in this world.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ See *Watch* 149: "For just as a man born blind reasons illogically about the colors that he has never seen, someone who has not suffered hardships is inexperienced and is no good judge of tribulations." *Hor.* 448.21-24 *Sicut enim caecus natus de non visis coloribus imperfecte syllogizat, sic qui non est passus adversa, tamquam inexpertus minus perfecte de tribulationibus iudicat.* See also 449: ... *Vox eius dulcisona in caeli palatio, corde iucundo, cantum sibi vindicate singularem, quem cantare nequeunt, quo in huius vitae per animi tolerantiam eum cantare non meruerunt.*

¹¹⁴ See *Watch* 188, the story of the disciple's soul who is at the brink of desperation from ongoing tribulations, until she, i.e. the soul, recognizes that they are signs of love from God himself.

¹¹⁵ An often mentioned 'element of piety' in ascetic-mystical literature in particular is illness, which occurs time and again in the Sister-Books. Exotic to today's ideals of the healthy body, illness and bodily weakness was regarded as a state of similarity with the weakened, suffering Christ, see Dinzelsbacher (2007), 11.

¹¹⁶ See a similar formulation by Richard of St Victor, cited in Constable (1996), p. 153.

¹¹⁷ *Watch* 182 "O how merciful you spare us, in giving us adversities here, and how severe is your wrath when you distribute nothing but prosperity! Very loving is your fatherly correction." *Hor.* 477.20-22 *O quam misericorditer parcis cum huic adverse tribuis, et quam severe irasceris cum sepmel elargiris. Amabilis valde est tua paterna correptio.*

Tribulation and Consolation: "A fullness of graces"

To provide consolation to people who encountered suffering was an important task in late medieval pastoral care. The *consolatorium* ("book of consolation") developed as a genre of its own, inspired by sources from antiquity, especially Boethius' famous and influential *De consolazione philosophia*.¹¹⁸ Suso's contemporary Johannes von Dambach (also he was a Dominican and a student of Eckhart), became highly influential with his *Consolatio theologia*.¹¹⁹ Consolation books, as in Dambach's case, could provide encyclopedic lists of consolations for specific hardships.¹²⁰ Suso's *Horologium* was, in part, received as a consolation book, as seen in the *De consolazione aeternae sapientiae*, which develops further parts from the *Horologium*, and especially parts on *tribulatio* from chapter thirteen.¹²¹ We see in the *Horologium* itself that Suso's Wisdom offers consolation to the saddened disciple on numerous occasions, particularly related to *tristitia*, sadness, grief, or inner pain, due to hardships of various kinds. Often, this consolation entails an encouragement to *compare* one's suffering to that of Christ, or to dispel "inordinate sorrow" (*tristitia inordinata*) by meditative immersion in the passion of Christ, which was agreed upon as a suffering far worse than any type a human might encounter. However, as seen in the use of the term "consolation," we see that it also has a different meaning than simply providing a suffering person *reasons* for why it is beneficial to sustain.¹²² Suso is also interested in consolation in the sense of the "sweet visitations," or as an inner "joy" that comes from experiencing divine presence.

In the extract above, we see that tribulation is held to be "a healing plant, it confers the fullness of graces" and it provides "an unending fullness of inward joys." That is to say, via tribulations, Eternal Wisdom (God) mediates a grace

¹¹⁸ An important study consolation books from this period is Auer (1928). See more recently Grosse (1994), pp. 162-6, here p. 164.

¹¹⁹ See TRE 2, p. 694; Auer (1928). We may also mention Meister Eckhart's *Buoch der goetliche troestunge*, "Book of Divine Consolation," although Auer does not regard this work as a *consolatorium* according to his rather strict definition, see (1928), p. 260.

¹²⁰ Grosse (1994), p. 164.

¹²¹ Auer (1928), pp. 246-7; 259-60.

¹²² "Trostgrunde," as seen in books of consolation, see Grosse (1994), p. 164.

beyond the basic *grata infusa*, which was bestowed upon all believers through baptism.¹²³ A “fullness of graces” appears to correspond to what scholastic tradition regarded as the state of grace by which humans are contrite and acceptable to God (*gratia gratum faciens*), which was bestowed primarily through proper use of the sacraments of the Church. Grace, however, was also made accessible through other means and ‘channels’: relics, liturgy, Holy Scripture, images, prayer, and so on.¹²⁴ Typical to the interiorized religiosity that Suso in large represents, a “fullness of graces” is mediated on a personal and experiential level.¹²⁵ That is to say, it is an ‘extra-sacramental’ theology of near grace that emphasizes personal immediacy with God. Importantly, this does not necessarily stand in opposition to an institutional mediation of grace, as we shall see in the next chapter on the Eucharist, but the strong preference given to personal immediacy cannot be overlooked.¹²⁶ Similar to the prayers to the name of Jesus (II, 7), endurance of tribulations seem to have the effect of raising devotion to a higher level, which can be experienced as an inward joy or sweetness.¹²⁷ There is, namely, occasional relief from hardships: tribulations, it is said, are often followed by “consolations” or “divine visitation”. Unlike the consolation books, which provided matter-of-fact reasons for consolation, Suso’s idea of consolation in this sense is purely experiential. The same idea is expressed in the prayer of the disciple in chapter thirteen: “O most clement God, consider clemently our tribulations, and give us the power to suffer them, and give strength from on high to our weak hearts with your most welcome consolations.”¹²⁸ Several chapters in the *Horologium* explore and reflect

¹²³ See Leppin (2007b), pp. 116-17; *STh* I-II q. 111 a. 1. What is grace? A definition is given by Hamm, (2009), pp. 22: “Die Gnade im weitesten Sinne ist die mit Gott identische und vor Gott her kommende Kraft, die den Menschen zu seinem himmlischen Ziel der ewigen Herrlichkeit führt, ihn und seine Gemeinschaft aber auch vor irdischem Schaden bewahrt.”

¹²⁴ See Hamm (2009).

¹²⁵ Within later Medieval “Frömmigkeitstheologie” Berndt Hamm points to two main trends of theological effort: an emphasis on the exterior institutionalized forms of grace mediation within the hierarchy of the Church, and an “interiorizing trend” with emphasis on personal encounter and immediacy. See, e.g., (2009), p. 48.

¹²⁶ See Leppin (2007a); see also below, on Suso’s indulgence thought.

¹²⁷ For examples of innovative forms of “mediation of grace” in late medieval piety, see Hamm (2009).

¹²⁸ *Watch* 188; *Hor.* 481.28-482.2 *O clementissime Deus tribulationes nostras clementer considera, et virtutem patiendi praesta, ac tuis consolationibus corda invalida ex alto confirma..*

upon such states of “sweet visitation,” that is, experiences of an inner presence or influence of divine grace, which is often expressed in a language of bridal mysticism.¹²⁹

In the intense emotional religiosity that the dialogue portrays and accommodates, such “visitations” come and go in sequences. This intense and unsettling ‘oscillation’ between various states is a primary characteristic of what Suso, inspired by Ovid, calls the *ludus amoris*, the “game of love.”¹³⁰ To approach the divine lover and to experience her presence, and then again to experience the painful absence as she withdraws, is the theme in chapter eight in book one.¹³¹ Through a number of paragraphs, in part indebted to Hugh of St. Victor,¹³² Suso lets his disciple retell from such exceptional states where he experiences “spiritual grace” (*gratia spiritualis*), or “joy of love” (*gaudium amoris*).¹³³ These exceptional states of grace are bestowed by God,¹³⁴ as “...sweet meditation flow into [the soul]” the disciple says, “so that in some way I seem to begin to savor the signs of a new age.” These are moments of “good intention,” where devotional life, even fasting and asceticism, seems easy and light.¹³⁵ However, it is the nature of the “game of love” that this grace withdraws: “The game of love is joy and sorrow, succeeding one another through the presence and absence of the beloved.”¹³⁶ “Tasting the Lord’s mixed cup” (Ps 74.9) is another way of describing the bitterness and sweetness between which devotional life fluctuates.

¹²⁹ The main chapters in this regard are I, 6 and II, 7-8.

¹³⁰ *Watch* 124; 145; *Hor.* 426; 445.

¹³¹ *Watch* 137; *Hor* 436; the chapter is entitled: “How Divine Visitations Come and Go, and How at These Times the Soul Should Bear Itself,” *De vicissitudine visitationis divinae et qualiter anima debet se tunc tenere*.

¹³² Suso’s source, Künzle observes, is Hugh’s *De arrha animae*, “The Pledge of the Soul.” Künzle (1977), p. 444.

¹³³ *Watch* 144-5; *Hor.* 444.1-29.

¹³⁴ *Watch* 145 ; *Hor.* 445.4-5 *Ex te non nisi deficiis, et ad nihilum tendis. Haec autem et similia per praesentiam meam tibi noveris concessa.*

¹³⁵ *Watch* 144; *Hor.* 444.15-16 *Tunc omnia, quae prius dura et aspera et quodam modo impossibilia videbantur, dulcia reddebantur ac levia.*

¹³⁶ *Watch* 145; *Hor.* 445.8-9 *Ludus amoris est gaudium et dolor, quae sibi invicem ex praesentia vel absentia dilecti succedunt.* See Hamm (2007b), pp. 136-37.

A *sequential* structure of divine presence and absence is a main characteristic of the *Horologium*. Suso explores the poles of devotional life.¹³⁷ The Disciple's first encounter with Eternal wisdom in the book, described in a high-flown language, is immediately followed by parts where the "skies are darkening," and the threatening image of God as an angry judge (*iudex iratus*) appears.¹³⁸ Frequent and dramatic changes of mood caused by different types of presence—sweet presence of the beloved Wisdom and the threatening face of the judging God—is typical for the structure of the dialogue in the work. These fluctuations of spiritual life are also explicitly addressed by Suso in the work.

We find a form of mysticism that certainly emphasizes the possibility of experiencing divine presence, but not primarily in the sense of *unio mystica*. Divine presence is described as brief moments of joy, "consolation," but thus also explicitly distinguished from the "entering into heaven," that is, *Unio mystica*, which is attainable in this life only for "very few" (*paucissimi*).¹³⁹ We find thus a double perspective regarding mysticism. Without denying the possibility of 'real' *unio* already in this life, Suso is primarily concerned with what we might call a 'domesticated' mysticism, a form that stresses visitation (closeness, embrace, proximity, joy).¹⁴⁰ Whereas the idea of *unio mystica* can be seen expressed only a few times throughout the entire work, passages about "visitations" and "consolations" are frequent; such experiences of presence seem to be regarded as rather common states of divine inspiration, a welcoming relief in a devotional life which is fundamentally conditioned by ongoing hardships.¹⁴¹

In the quoted 'catalogue' of the benefits of tribulations in chapter thirteen, it is said that tribulation "sprinkles its goodness around" (*bonitatis aspergine*) and

¹³⁷ This is characteristically stated in the title of chapter seven (I, 7): "That divine Wisdom is at once lovable and terrible."

¹³⁸ See below, pp. 105-110; 196-99.

¹³⁹ *Watch* 145-6; *Hor.* 445.15ff; see Imbach (1987), pp. 162.

¹⁴⁰ See Hamm (1999), p. 14; (2010a), p. 206: "Wo von einem mystischen Gottesverhältnis des Menschen gesprochen wird, geht es immer um die persönliche, unmittelbare und ganzheitliche Erfahrung einer beseligenden Nähe Gottes, die ihr Ziel in einer innigen Vereinigung mit Gott findet." This understanding, see 206, n. 17, is close to that of Bernard McGinn (1991).

¹⁴¹ *Watch* 187; *Hor.* 480.26 ... *sed istis tribulationibus novas continuavit*. See also *Vita* Ch. 20-35.

that this is beneficial to “the beginners, the proficient and the perfect.”¹⁴² Suso here employs a traditional three-part hierarchy of spiritual ascension (*incipientes*, *proficientes*, and *perfecti*).¹⁴³ This is the only instance in the *Horologium* where we find this terminology, which was used by mystical theologians.¹⁴⁴ Importantly, these terms are not used by Suso in order to call attention to a process towards the higher states of perfection. In-stead, he inserts tribulation as the primary principle, which is, for ‘everyone,’ at every stage of development.¹⁴⁵ Even if devotees are afflicted variously, some less than others, the main point is that tribulations do not stop; for most people there is no lasting rest to be found while still on earth.¹⁴⁶ In chapter eleven, the disciple asks Eternal Wisdom to be allowed remain in the heavenly vision that has been shown to him,¹⁴⁷ but is told that: “It is now time for you to fight” (*Tempus pugnandi tibi adest*).¹⁴⁸

We shall continue our discussion of the *Horologium* and mysticism in the part below that discusses with imitation of Christ, and also in later parts of this study. For now, let us assert a main tendency: Suso wants to steer his readers away from a devotion based on states of contemplation and exceptional experiences alone. In-stead, tribulation is praised in terms that should leave little doubt as to Suso’s main objective: tribulation is an articulation of the most secure path to salvation.¹⁴⁹ “Spiritual consolations” are pauses, brief moments of relief—

¹⁴² *Watch* 197; *Hor.* 489.29-490.1; cf. *Hor.* 449.21.

¹⁴³ The scheme of ascension goes back to Gregory’s *Moralia* (XXIV), see Ruh (1993), p. 429.

¹⁴⁴ For instance by David von Augsburg or Johannes Tauler, see Willing (2004).

¹⁴⁵ For a further discussion of Suso and mysticism in the *Horologium*, see below Chapter Two, pp. 146-56; Chapter Three, pp 240-54.

¹⁴⁶ See I, 8, *Watch* 154-6; *Hor.* 445, on the *ludus amoris*.

¹⁴⁷ *De gaudis supercaelestibus*, See *Watch* 163-71; *Hor* 460-68.

¹⁴⁸ *Watch* 171; *Hor.* 468.16-19.

¹⁴⁹ *Watch* 196: “This is the ‘narrow way,’ but it is safe and quick, and ‘leads to life’.” *Hor.* 489.9-10 *Ipsa est ‘arta via’, sed secunda et compendiosa ‘ducens ad vitam’* [Mt. 7.14].

Suso’s strong emphasis on what is beneficial for salvation can sometimes make it difficult to distinguish whether consolations refer to a state of salvation or to ‘mystical’ states of divine presence and spiritual joy. Thus, when we read that tribulation “...brings a short bitterness and a long consolation” (*Brevem habet amaritudinem et longam consolationem*) this clearly does not refer to the visitations of wisdom that a religious person may experience in life, but to the state of salvation. At the end of this same paragraph Wisdom rephrases this point “...for labor has its end, the reward has no end,” leaving little doubt that this discussion is about the eternal reward in heaven that awaits the elect who are tried with adversities while on earth. It is a contrasting state-

sometimes expressed as heavenly music¹⁵⁰—that encourage the afflicted devout along the way.¹⁵¹ Suso never fails to remind his reader: the true goal is eternal salvation. In this ‘salvation perspective,’ tribulations are far more beneficial than sweet consolations.¹⁵²

The Patience of the Elect

We shall comment on another typical understanding of *tribulatio* that is seen in the first passage quoted above. It is said that “everyday” is to be “a soldiering” for God. On numerous occasions *tribulatio* is used in combination with the classic metaphor of the *miles Christi*, “the soldier of Christ.”¹⁵³ Very often, this ideal occurs in Eternal Wisdom’s responses to the Disciple who complains about the hardships that have afflicted him. Ranges of words that draw on the basic *miles* metaphor are used to encourage the weak “spiritual beginner” to endure tribulations.¹⁵⁴ The Disciple is told that he is a “womanish soldier” (*delicatus miles*), and

ment, which corresponds to the juxtaposition of the corruptible body and the immortal soul. These types of statements that juxtapose the briefness of “worldly tribulations” with eternal happiness have a direct opposite in the chapter about the torments of hell: “A brief delight, what a long rope of eternal misery does it drag after it!” *Watch* 159; *Hor.* 457.17-8 *Quam brevis delectatio tam longam restem post se trahit aeternae miseriae.*

¹⁵⁰ See *Watch* 195; *Hor.* 487-88.

¹⁵¹ See also *Watch* 195; On continuous suffering of adversities and “to be supported by your sweet consolation”; *Hor.* 488.5 *adversa continue pati et tua consolatione dulcissima sic foveri.*

¹⁵² *Hor.* 487.7-9 *Divinae dulcedinis immensa copia in quantum huius non esset tibi adeo meritoria nec tanta laude digna, quantum ex fervida caritate tribulatio patienter perpessa.* *Watch* 194 “any part of the immense fullness of divine sweetness that you may so gain may not be for you so truly meritorious or so praiseworthy as when tribulation is patiently and steadfastly suffered out of a fervent love.”

¹⁵³ See for instance *Hor.* 490.27 *Non tantum solent homines mundani tereno militi strenue in turneamento decertanti intendere, quantum tota caelestis frequentia favere et intendere solet homini spirituali viriliter militanti in via.* See Sandra Fenten’s comments on this motive in Suso, (2007) pp. 166-83; esp. 171-2 with references. The ideal of the spiritual soldier is an ancient image that occurs time and again throughout the Middle Ages; it goes back to St. Paul, and is frequent in John Cassian, one of Suso’s preferred spiritual authorities, and it was a favored term among the monastic reformers of the twelfth-century. See Constable (1996). See also Stein-Kecks (2007), pp. 237-60, on holiness and the *miles* ideal.

¹⁵⁴ *strenuus, strenuissimus, acies, armiger, athleta, bellator, pugiles, stola bellica, viri fortes*, and so on, occur often and especially in chapters nine and thirteen. See also *Watch* 171; *Hor.* 468.16-19: *tempus pugnandi tibi adest.*

that he should compare his small hardships to those of the martyrs or the patriarchs, or most importantly, to those of Christ himself.¹⁵⁵ “A dauntless warrior, to exert and prove himself, desires to experience tribulation and find misery.”¹⁵⁶ “...set aside now all your anxious fear, and put on a manly spirit (*indue animum virilem*). Act with constancy, and stand steadfastly with me in the front line of the battle.”¹⁵⁷ We may assume that a cult of military saints and crusaders, as well as courtly ideals and knightly tournaments, formed an associative background for this language in Suso’s time.¹⁵⁸

Throughout the *Horologium*, we find a number of visions that are shown to the Disciple’s ‘inner eye’. These are short detours from the primary dialogue, and in them important issues are illustrated. A very interesting portrayal of *tribulatio* can be seen in a vision in chapter five of book one. In this story, a town is being tyrannized by a figure known allegorically as a ram who wears a silver crown. As a part of this reign of terror, a small minority of Friends of God is being persecuted by the ram and his army.¹⁵⁹ Whereas most people in the town have yielded to the ram out of fear, the small ‘army’ of people of God perseveres through this turmoil, in steadfast and patient prayer.¹⁶⁰ Eventually God intervenes and overthrows the Ram.¹⁶¹ Interestingly, unlike the Ram’s army, the little ‘army of Christ’ is said to be untrained for war and it is emphasized that they did not bear weap-

¹⁵⁵ This encouragement to “stand up” and endure and to compare one’s suffering with those of “valiant men” is seen both in chapter 9 and 13, the two main ‘tribulation chapters.’ See *Watch* 188-9; 193; *Hor.* 481-2; 486.

¹⁵⁶ *Watch* 152; *Hor.* 451.4,8-9 *Delicatus miles es, qui adverse tantum formidas (...)* *Bellator invictus, ad exercendum se et probandum tribulationem et miseriam invenire desiderat.* See the contribution by Meri Heinonen in Cullun / Lewis (eds.) (2005), *Holiness and Masculinity in the Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press).

¹⁵⁷ *Watch* 82; *Hor.* 388.24-27 *...depone nunc omnem cordis tui fromidolosem timorem, et indue animum virilem. Constanter age et in acie fortiter mecu consiste.*

¹⁵⁸ Whereas the men of the world are watching “some earthly knight fighting valiantly in tournaments,” the spiritual man (*homini spirituali*), it is said, is watched by the whole heavenly company; the saints, who have tasted the “mixed cup” before him, are spectators to his soldiering. For comments on the motive of the soldier in the *Vita* see Ruh (1996), pp. 448-9.

¹⁵⁹ *Watch* 110-11; *Hor.* 412.23-415.5.

¹⁶⁰ *Watch* 112; *Hor.* 414.23-4.

¹⁶¹ *Watch* 112; *Hor.* 415.7-9.

ons.¹⁶² They simply persevered and came through. In this story, Suso demonstrates a classic conception of the Christian *miles*, namely that he is a *passive* fighter.¹⁶³ “Patience in adversity” is the key formulation throughout many of the passages on tribulation, and patience is, essentially, a passive virtue.¹⁶⁴

The ram with the silver crown in this story has been recognized, first by Karl Bihlmeyer, as emperor Lewis of Bavaria. Suso’s story reflects the conflict between Lewis and the Avignon Pope John XXII,¹⁶⁵ a conflict that resulted in papal interdict, which in turn forced the Dominicans of Constance to leave the city. This story, then, is in a way a small polemic treatise within the *Horologium*.¹⁶⁶ Suso’s position as a Dominican who sided with the pope is clearly seen, as the Ram is castigated as a cruel tyrant. Bad governance is, of course, also severely punished in Hell, as is seen in another of Suso’s visions.¹⁶⁷ Importantly for us, this conflict provided Suso with material for another portrayal of his main theme in the *Horologium*: how God permits tribulations upon his friends.¹⁶⁸ The text is presented as another encouragement “never to despair in adversity” but to sustain,

¹⁶² In Suso’s *Hor.*, the *planctus* chapter and the vision of the Ram and his army, the small group of God’s people meet this army without weapons; but also in the *Vita*, and despite all the (active) efforts of self-torture by the servant in the latter, the main point is to remain steadfast against outer temptations. See Fenten (2007b), p. 176-7.

¹⁶³ Sandra Fenten, (2007b), p. 177, refers to Hohenstein-Hasler, who pointed out that Chrysostom emphasized the *passivity* of the *militia Christi*.

¹⁶⁴ Gregory the Great, when he described the sufferings of Job (both were immensely influential in the Middle Ages), portrayed these by emphasizing the passive virtue of *patientia*. See Fenten (2007), p. 177. In Suso’s *Horologium*, the *planctus* chapter and the vision of the Ram and his army, we see thus that the small group of God’s people meet this army *without* weapons; but also in the *Vita*, and despite all the (active) efforts of self-torture by the servant in the latter, the main point is to remain steadfast against outer temptations. Fenten (2007), p. 176-7.

¹⁶⁵ *Hor.* 413.3-15. See Bihlmeyer (1907/61), pp. 127-130; Senner (1994), pp. 10-12; for this conflict more generally see also Miethke and Bühler (1988), pp. 38-48.

¹⁶⁶ See Bihlmeyer (1907/1961), p. 106 n.1. The story is unique to the *Horologium*, and it most likely reflects events very close in time to the writing of the book. It was in the years 1343-44, which is precisely when Fenten (2007b) thinks that the *Horologium* was written that Suso, because of the interdict, had to leave Constance for St. Katherinenthal/Diessenhofen. See Senner (1994), pp. 11-12. See also Bihlmeyer (1907/1961), p. 106; Kunzle (1977), pp. 23-7.

¹⁶⁷ See I, 10, see n. above.

¹⁶⁸ As the servant’s response to this vision shows, see *Watch* 112-13; “It is an astonishing and wonderful thing,” says the Disciple to this, “that the inscrutable abyss of the judgments of God permits his elect to be so afflicted, yet he has never deserted them, but frees and protects them as a most loving father.” *Hor.* 415.16-18 *Res stupenda partier et miranda, quod imperscrutabilis abyssus iudiciorum Dei electos suso sic tribulari permittit, nec tamen usquequaque deserit, sed tam paterne liberat et protegit.*

according to God's will, however abandoned the elect may feel. Despite its broad political implications and the dramatic display in this story, the main concern is nonetheless how to deal with the impediments on daily devotion to which such political turmoil could lead; it is another simple admonition for patience through whatever adversities the world might offer.¹⁶⁹

"Every day is a soldiering," as we read in the passage that was quoted above. Tribulations are not necessarily exceptional episodes, although they can be that too. Most importantly, Suso's teaching on this point provides a means of interpreting everyday religious life and experience in the world of whatever kind within a specific framework of Christian self-identification as *miles Christi*. Such a self-identification brings consolation to he or she who experiences suffering, especially because it also entails a 'comparative' strategy: the Disciple, who often complains that God allows him to be afflicted with hardships, is constantly admonished to look to the martyrs and the apostles, and most importantly to Christ, and to realize that by comparison his own sufferings are minor. Importantly, however, despite this 'relation of infinitude' between human hardships and the works of Christ and the martyrs, everyday tribulations are not insignificant or unwelcome to God. This has to do with the close identification of tribulation to the suffering of Christ, which will be discussed below.

¹⁶⁹*Watch* 113; *Hor.* 415.21-23 ... *ut discas in nulla unquam adversitate desperare, sed omnem spem in Deum ponere et orationis refugia quaerere in tribulationibus cunctis.*

God's Elect

Tribulation, in most uses of this word in the *Horologium*, is something that derives from Eternal Wisdom, that is, from God.¹⁷⁰ In his omnipotence, God can bestow prosperity or tribulations.¹⁷¹ Tribulations, however, are far more beneficial, as they entail an opportunity to suffer on earth and thus be spared of punishment in the afterlife. It is a gift (*exenium ac iocale*) of divine goodness, full of benefits. It is a sign of divine benevolence and, importantly, of *election*.

Very often, the words *tribulatio* and *adversitas* occur in combination with *electi*, *cari*, *amici Dei* or similar such 'terms of friendship'.¹⁷² Most common among them is *electi*, "the elect", or "the chosen ones". *Electi* are described as "...they whom the Lord has reserved for himself."¹⁷³ To be afflicted with tribulations means to be chosen by God, appointed as one of his close friends, and to begin the process of reorientation and return by accepting these God-willed afflictions.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ See, e.g., *Watch* 192 "So, whatever adversity may happen to you, it is brought about at the instance and by the providence of him by whose power all things were created and are preserved in their being." *Hor.* 485.16-18 *Unde quaevis tibi occurrens adversitas, eius nutu et providentia geritur, cuius virtute cunctae res drectae sunt et in suo esse conservantur.*

¹⁷¹ *Watch* 182 "O how merciful you spare us, in giving us adversities here, and how severe is your wrath when you distribute nothing but prosperity! Very loving is your fatherly correction." *Hor.* 477.20-22 *O quam misericorditer parcis cum huic adverse tribuis, et quam severe irasceris cum sepmper elargiris. Amabilis valde est tua paterna correptio.*

¹⁷² See the title of 'tribulation chapter' nine, *Hor.* 448.6-7 *Quare divina sapientia suos caros in hoc mundo permittit tam multipliciter tribulari.* *Watch* 149. Other terms of affiliation are *Vir secundum cor Dei* (482.18), Cf. *Ps* 70.20, or *servus Dei*, as in the title of the chapter thirteen. *Hor.* 478.1; *Watch* 184.

¹⁷³ *Watch* 196; *Hor.* 409.14: *hi sunt, quos reservavit sibi dominus.* In the Eucharist chapter, *Hor* 558.16-20, Eternal wisdom instructs: *cum profundo cordis gemitu in hanc vocem erumpat et dicat: "Vere tu es Deus absconditus."* [*Is* 45.15] *Et: . . . "quod oculus non vidit, nec auris audivit, nec in cor hominis terestris 'ascendit' [1. Cor 2.9] non solus quae Deus electis suis in future reservavit, sed nec ea, quae in hac vita suis amatoribus dare consuevit.* See also *Watch* 198; *Hor.* 490.20 *Ego, qui cuncta creavi ex nihilo, tribulationes improvisas undecumque super electos meos induco, ne eorum immense priventur beneficio.*

¹⁷⁴ "And how should man ... more regularly have regained what he had lost than through worldly tribulation," *Watch* 84; *Hor.* 391.7.

Electi and similar terms have a twofold meaning in the *Horologium*: First, they point to the precursors, the religious examples throughout history, and, second, they mean the chosen friends of God of ‘today’, that is, people who have chosen a life of true devotion.¹⁷⁵ Among these forerunners of the elect are the patriarchs of the Old Testament (not surprisingly, Job occurs often as an exemplary sufferer¹⁷⁶), the Apostles of Christ, the martyrs of early Christianity, and the Desert Fathers, who throughout the Middle Ages represented the ideal devotional life.¹⁷⁷ These *electi* serve as role models, a company of chosen ones who with their “enduring hope” should be held as a “mirror of patience, and give (...) strength in adversities.”¹⁷⁸ Throughout history, these special Friends of God had led a distinguished life of virtue and were seen to reside in heaven as partakers in God’s heavenly court.¹⁷⁹ As for the theological problem of the salvation of men who had

¹⁷⁵ The term *Amici dei* or *Gottesfreunde*, “Friends of God,” is used in various ways in this period. For instance in the papal bull *Unigenitus* (1343), Friends of God is used in the sense of those who have turned to God and achieved contrition by means of the sacraments of the Church. *Gottesfreunde*, however, was also the name used for one or several actual historical milieus, such as the *Gottesfreunde* of Basel or Strassbourg; Tauler and Suso seem to have had a particular influence on these groups. These were groups of mystically oriented devotees and also a historical precursor to the more persistent movement of the *Devotion moderna*. See Mohr, Art. ‘Gottesfreunde,’ in Dinzelbacher (ed.) (1998), pp. 197-8; J. Semmler, Art ‘Gottesfreund(e)’ in LMA vol. 4, cols. 1586-7. See also McGinn (2005a) Ch 9. It lies beyond the task of this study to discuss Suso and the *Gottesfreunde* circles. We may add, however, that for this study of the *Horologium*, with its explicit broad appeal (see introduction above), there is little reason to limit Suso’s use of such terms of affiliation to particular historical groups about whom we nonetheless know very little. We shall therefore regard terms such as *amici dei* in the *Horologium* more in line with what Karl Bihlmeyer asserted: “Von diesen Gottesfreunde, wie sie sich nannten, nicht im Sinne eines freikirchlichen Geheimbundes, sondern eines innigen Zusammenschlusses aller Gleichgesinnten zur gegenseitigen Förderung und erbauung, ging eine geistige Befürchtung zunächst in klösterliche, dann aber auch in Laienkreise aus (...) Bei Seuse ist die Beziehung ganz allgemein für jeden Frommen (z.B. Auch die Martyrer (...)), namentlich aber für die Anhänger der mystischen Devotion gebraucht.” (1907/61), p. 99 and n. 3.

¹⁷⁶ See esp. *Watch* 152-3; *Hor.* 483.3-4.

¹⁷⁷ *Hor.* 482.10.18; see Gnädinger (1998); Kunze, Williams and Kaiser (1987) 123-42. See also C 191; *Hor.* 484.19-23: these fathers, Arsenius, Macarius, Anthony, Paul, etc. “sought out the harsh wastes of the emptiest desert, and there, remote from every human face, suffering innumerable hardships with great devotion, led a life admirable to all men” (*innumera adverse devotissime tolerantes, cunctis admirabilem duxerunt vitam*); for the Desert Fathers in Suso’s *Vita*, where the *Vitaspartum* plays a prominent role, see Williams-Krapp (1992).

¹⁷⁸ *Watch* 189; *Hor.* I, 482.21-24 *Abraham, benedictum domini; Moysen, electum a domino, et ceteros patriarchas, prophetas et amicos Dei altissimi, quorum longanimitas spei non immerito speculum patientiae tibi esse deberet et te cordatum reddere in adversis.*

¹⁷⁹ *Watch* 181-82 “Thus it was from the beginning of the world, that various holy men and God’s greatest friends, sustaining many hardships and earing (*sic*) them all patiently, merited the

lived before the redemption, Suso asserts that it was because of their patience in adversities that these “from the beginning of the world” merited the “palm.”¹⁸⁰

These parts of the *Horologium* show an emphasis on adversity as sign of election and on the exercise of patience, which is closely associated with the “palm of martyrs.” Again, we observe the profoundly eschatological outlook that governs Suso’s teaching of tribulation.

The virtue of patience is more than the raising up of dead men and the performance of other miracles. It confers the glory of martyrdom, and it offers the victorious palm. It is clothed in a purple robe, it is given a wreath of glowing roses, it is adorned with a golden scepter, it is invested with a royal diadem. It is a carbuncle, shining in golden necklaces; and this is patience, showing itself when hardships occur. Gleaming gem, perfume breathing sweetness, and honeycomb distilling everywhere—so is a religious walking patiently among his brethren and equably suffering their faults. His voice sounds sweetly from a joyous heart in the palace of heaven, he claims as his own a special song that they do not know how to sing who have not merited to sing it by their spirit’s toleration in the adversities of this life. What more need I say? “There is no tongue that can tell, no letter can express” how very profitable it can be to suffer adversities in patience.¹⁸¹

As is seen so often in parts that deal with this theme, there is an emphasis on the benefits, profits, usefulness, and so on, of sustaining hardships in patience. Suso follows Gregory and emphasizes that the saints are to be remembered not for

eternal rewards that you have seen, ‘and now they are crowned and receive the palm.’” *Hor.* 476.28-477.1 *Sic igitur ab initio mundi diversi homines sancti et amici Dei altissimi, multa adverse sustinentes at patienter omnia ferentes, praemia quae vidisti meruerunt aeterna, ‘modo coronatur et accipiunt palmam.’*

¹⁸⁰ As to the question of “Whether Christ is the head of all men,” and thus also whether the “ancient fathers” (patriarchs) belong to the same church as Christians, Thomas Aquinas had affirmed this on the grounds that they made use of the ‘shadow sacraments’, the precursors to the sacraments of the Church. For instance the “manna from heaven” preceded the Eucharistic sacrament. Thus, the patriarchs were, according to Thomas, “born to Christ by the same faith and love whereby we also are borne to Him.” *STh* III, q.8, a.3. See Kunzle (1977), pp. 476-77.

¹⁸¹ *Watch* 198-99; *Hor.* 491.2-15 *Virtus patientiae suscitationi mortuorum et ceterorum operationi miraculorum praefertur. Ipsa martyrii confert gloriam et palmam praestat victoriosam. Veste purpurea induitur, serto de rosis rutilantibus redimitur, aureo sceptro adornatur, region diademate insignitur. Carbunculus lucens in aureis monilibus: sic patientia se ostendes in adversis evidentibus. Gemmula radians, odor suaviter fragrans, et favus undique distillans: sic religious inter fratres suos patienter ambulans et defectus fratrum aequanimiter portans. Vox eius dulcisona in caeli palatio, corde iucundo, cantum sibi vindicate singularem, quem cantare nequeunt, quo in huius vitae per animi tolerantiam eum cantare non meruerunt. Quid plura? ‘Nec lingua posset dicere, nec littera exprimere,’ quam perutile sit adverse patienter sustinere.*

their miracles, but for how they “suffered adversity in patience.”¹⁸² Saints are not primarily intercessors, miracle workers, or objects of veneration as such, but patient ‘sufferers’, who reside in heaven on that account. That is, they endured God’s tribulations in life. In general, saints play a minor role in Suso’s piety and are rarely mentioned in the *Horologium*. When they do occur, their function is, characteristically, as role models that point to the salvific virtue of patience in *adversitas*.

Berndt Hamm formulates the traditional ideal of holiness, not simply as the “provision of grace for all true Christians in the scholastic sense of the *grata infusa*, but above all as an exceptional divine gift bestowed on special people because of their meritorious asceticism.”¹⁸³ One essential feature of the ‘classic’ saints is their unique proximity to God, which enables them to pray directly to God and receive strength from Him.¹⁸⁴ Thus, they are strengthened and protected against the temptations of the demons. The disciple’s prayer in chapter thirteen has already been mentioned: “O most clement God, consider clemently our tribulations, and give us the power to suffer them, and give strength from on high to our weak hearts with your most welcome consolations.”¹⁸⁵ We see that the *electi* pray directly to God and receive power (*virtutem patiendi*) from Him, thus attaining the traditional function of the ‘holy man.’ Apart from the ability to work miracles, this standard feature of the saints is directly transferred to the *electi*, meaning the devotees of ‘today,’ in the passages that deal with tribulatio and adversitas in the *Horologium*. André Vauchez observed a transition in the devo-

¹⁸² See *Watch* 198; *Hor.* 491.2-3 *virtus patientiae suscitationi mortuorum et ceterorum operationi miraculorum praefertur*, which Künzle, (1977), p. 491, shows is drawn from Gregory’s *Dialogues*. The saints that are mentioned as part of the *electi*, God’s friends, are exclusively martyr saints or apostles, who are remembered foremost for the adversities they experienced as the first followers of Christ. *Watch* 190; *Hor.* 483.8 *Nonne vides apostolos, amicos meos carissimos, in hoc mundo degere*; and the martyrs *innumera tormentorum genera passi*; 483.15 ... *innumera tormentorum genera passi, gloriosissime coronati sunt*.

¹⁸³ See Hamm (2004) with further references to classic studies on sainthood by Browe, Angenendt, Bieler, p. 259.

¹⁸⁴ Arnold Angenendt comments on St. Anthony, who “... prayed and was so much strengthened that he felt that he had more power in his body than before,” (2005), p.161 (my trans.).

¹⁸⁵ *Watch* 188; *Hor.* 481.28-482.2 *O clementissime Deus tribulationes nostras clementer considera, et virtutem patiendi praesta, ac tuis consolationibus corda invalida ex alto confirma*.

tion to the saints in the later part of the Middle Ages, from veneration and emphasis on “the prodigies performed by their remains” to “the influence they exercised on the spiritual and on a moral plane.”¹⁸⁶ In Suso’s *Horologium*, this development is consummated: with the *electi* as a key category, the difference between saints and the truly devote becomes unclear and unimportant.¹⁸⁷ The status of election is within reach for the intended audience of the *Horologium*: In the visionary horizon, the patiently suffering elect of ancient times appear and lead the way for the elect of ‘today’.

The disciple in the *Horologium*, who is a figure of identification for the reader, aspires to be among the elect and is encouraged to accept and recognize that the tribulations that are bestowed upon him are *signs* of such an election.¹⁸⁸ In medieval theological doctrine, however, certain knowledge about one’s predestination and state of grace was basically unattainable except through special revelations granted very few.¹⁸⁹ St. Paul’s rapture (2. Cor 12.1-4) was commonly held as a unique example of the latter, whereas the words of Ecclesiastes were invoked to maintain a principle of uncertainty: “man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love, or hatred.”¹⁹⁰ Against this background, it is quite interesting to note the strong indications of election that are found with the concept of *tribulatio/adversitas*. To be afflicted with adversities is for Suso simply a sign of election.¹⁹¹ This is not to say that he goes against established doctrine. He expresses

¹⁸⁶ Vauchez (2005), p. 528.

¹⁸⁷ Jaques Le Goff’s comments on twelfth century eschatology: “Increasingly, the saved, whom Christ entrusts to the care of the angels to be led to Paradise, were depicted as “saints,” souls that had already passed through Purgatory and been purged, purified.” Le Goff (1981/1986), pp 232-3.

¹⁸⁸ The disciple often appears in the role of a weak sinner, whereas a different role is seen in the first chapter, *Hor.* 373-83, where it is discussed how some *electi*, by grace, are drawn to God, and how a “certain youth” (*quidam iuvenis*) was so drawn.” The Disciple here exemplifies a chosen one, someone “known to God” (*quidam iuvenis Deo notus*). To be chosen also means to be chosen for the ‘mystical marriage’ by Eternal wisdom. In book II, 6-8, the disciple receives his new name, Amandus, meaning “he who will be loved,” as a sign of election.

¹⁸⁹ Sven Grosse gives an overview of the basic position in classic scholastic theology concerning the problem of uncertainty, see Grosse (1994), pp. 35-9, with further references.

¹⁹⁰ Grosse (1994), p. 37. Eccl 9.1: *nescit homo utrum amore an odio dignus sit*; *STh* I.II, q. 112, a. 5.

¹⁹¹ Appel (1938), p. 16, simply concludes, “Leiden is Zeichen der Gottesfreunde, ist sicheres Merkmal der göttlichen Erwählung.” with reference to a key passage in the *Bdew*: “die

this same idea of uncertainty about God's judgments in chapter twelve.¹⁹² However, where Bonaventura and Thomas Aquinas held uncertainty of one's state of grace to rely on the inability of humans to *recognize* grace, Suso interestingly suggests an alternative and more voluntarist position: The outcome of humans is uncertain "especially because they so often change their own free will."¹⁹³ As man is "prone to evil," and this causes an 'uncertainty of perseverance,' it is necessary to appropriate God's will and to accept divine corrections.

How do we explain the strong indications of election that Suso expresses in his *tribulatio* teaching against this background of uncertainty? Whereas certainty of one's being in a state of grace was inaccessible, *signs* of being in a state of grace (*certitudo conjecturalis*) were held as possibilities by scholastic theologians since the *Summa Halensis*.¹⁹⁴ The types of signs that were emphasized could vary among theologians; for Aquinas, whom Suso often follows, joy of God and experience of sweetness (*experientia dulcedinis*), were such signs. Such indications are described in a similar way as "visitations" (I, 8), as discussed above.¹⁹⁵ The search for a certainty of salvation on an experiential level is a hallmark of mystically oriented theology; in this sense the concepts of *tribulatio* and *electi* can be seen as

lidenden heissent von der welt die armen, und heissent aber von mir [Christus] die seligen, wan sù sint min uzerwelten" (*Bdew* 252.28-29); The *Horologium* is in line with this. See also Haas (1993), p. 99.

¹⁹² *Hor.* 470.5-6 *quis mortalium poterit scire, qui sint damnandi, vel qui aeternaliter coronandi*, *Watch* 174: "...who among mortals will be able to know who they may be who will be damned, or who are to be eternally crowned..." See also Suso's Sermon 1 in *Exemplar* 367-8.

¹⁹³ See previous note: *Hor.* 470.6-7 *quis mortalium poterit scire, qui sint damnandi, vel qui aeternaliter coronandi*... with the addition: *maxime ex frequenti mutatione liberae voluntatis?* Suso elaborates: "You may see one man, from an anchorite's cell, holy as if he were Christ's own brother, turning away from the highest good, and falling into hell to be damned to eternity, and another coming out of the brothel with a contrite heart and joining the company of the angels to be eternally saved." *Watch* 174; *Hor.* 470.7-10 *Videas hunc de reclusorio veluti de Christi consortio aversum a summo bono, ruere in infernum aeternaliter damnandum; illum autem exire de prostibulo corde contrito, et angelorum iungi collegio aeternaliter salvandum*. Sven Grosse mentions that a similar position, which considers the distance of God and humans from a perspective of human instability due to their free will (held by Petrus Trabibus). See Grosse (1994), p. 37. A similar argument is used by Suso in Book II, chapter seven, to encourage daily devotional exercises: "...because the human spirit so easily forgets what it has undertaken, unless it is often renewed in its undertakings." *Watch* 322; *Hor.* 598.2-3. The challenge of 'spiritual perseverance,' we will see throughout this study, is a major concern for Suso in the *Horologium*.

¹⁹⁴ Grosse (1994), pp. 37-8.

¹⁹⁵ See Grosse (1994), p. 37.

a pursuit of an *experiential* certainty of salvation.¹⁹⁶ The idea of tribulations as signs of divine benevolence is expressed time and again in the *Horologium*; for instance, we find the following comparison: it is held that “As ‘the rainbow giving light among the bright clouds’ is the sign of divine peace towards the human race, so cruel tribulation is the sign (*signum*) of divine appeasement towards the contrite spirit.”¹⁹⁷

Electi Against the World

Throughout the *Horologium*, an antithetic language draws a line between a life of worldly pursuits and a life of true devotion. *Tribulatio* (or *adversitas*), *electi* (or *amatores*), and *patientia* are very often used as terms of distinction. Tribulations are signs of divine love by which the lovers of Christ are distinguished from the lovers of this world;¹⁹⁸ a scientist may penetrate every secret of the liberal arts, whereas tribulations, as works of God, are inscrutable (*inscrutabilis*); “divine tribulations” express the battle of the Christian soldier who, unlike worldly fighters, has no physical weapons¹⁹⁹ but mobilizes *patientia* in adversity. The way of the elect is described in contrast to ‘the world,’ but not in the sense of physical enclosure from it.²⁰⁰ Suso conveys a classical paradox: Christian life as that of a stranger in the world. He repeatedly emulates the spirit of the Desert Fathers, and he endorses the formula of Arsenius: *fuge, tace, quiescere*—but he maintains all the same that Christian life is fundamentally a life *in* the world and that spiritual development happens by way of the hardships that the world presents. We shall consider an important aspect of the “tribulatio complex,” namely, the *electi* in confrontation with impious surroundings.

¹⁹⁶ See Hamm (2010a), 237-8.

¹⁹⁷ *Watch* 196; *Hor.* 488.28-30 *Sicut ‘arcus refulgens inter nebulas gloriae’ [Eccl 50.8] signum est divinae pacis ad genus humanum, sic tribulatio saeviens signum est divinae propitiationis ad animum contritum.*

¹⁹⁸ See above, pp. 14-17.

¹⁹⁹ See above, pp. 47-48n.

²⁰⁰ The *cura monialium* was an important setting for Suso’s activity as friar, prior and author, which implied spiritual counseling of nuns who lived under strict enclosure. But the *Horologium*, we may repeat, is not limited to this setting. See introduction above.

A World Falling Apart

A gloomy outlook on the world pervades many parts of the *Horologium*. Suso's world is one where "the way of the wicked prospers" more than ever before.²⁰¹ This is best seen in his "lamentation of the Church" (*planctus ecclesiae*) in chapter five in book one.²⁰² Here, a notion of spiritual and moral decline "in modern times" (*moderni temporis*), and especially the loss of religious fervor among the people of the orders is a prominent theme.²⁰³ This is presented in the form of a *similitudo*, a vision, that appears to the Disciple's 'inner eye'. In the vision a poor, wretched pilgrim walks around in a city about to collapse in ruins. The pilgrim is rejected by most of the city's inhabitants, who are in turn described as "human-seeming sea monsters" (*monstra marina in effigie humana*).²⁰⁴ What does Suso want to suggest with this vision?

In typical fashion, the vision is followed by an explanation. The pilgrim, who is rejected by the inhabitants, turns out to be Christ himself. The "human-seeming sea monsters," Wisdom explains, are the "bad religious," those "with worldly hearts hiding under the religious habit."²⁰⁵ The city is collapsing due to enemy invasions and the inhabitants' neglect. The primary theme that the vision suggests is, of course, the loss of religious fervor and the difficult conditions for true piety in the present state of the world. Some parts of the "spiritual edifice" are still standing, however, and a few people are decent and righteous and stretch out their hands to help the pilgrim. These people represent the elect (*significant*

²⁰¹ Cf. Jer 12.1; *Watch* 149; *Hor.* 448.10.

²⁰² *Watch* 100; *Hor.* 404-12. For a study of this chapter, its 'Church criticism,' and also the indebtedness to Augustine's *De civitate Dei*, see Haas (1996), pp. 67-92.

²⁰³ The chapter presents a Church criticism, not in the sense of questioning the legitimacy of the institution but the religious and moral state of its members. In his comments on this chapter Alois Haas refutes Ernst Troeltsch's assertion that mysticism is essentially 'anti Church.' See Haas (1996), pp. 67-72. Toward the end of the chapter, Suso's disciple expresses the wish that the party of the Ram "may return back from their errors and return to unity and peace, so that we all may serve you in the bosom of our holy mother, the Catholic Church" (*Watch* 114), which exemplifies the Dominican Suso's position in this conflict.

²⁰⁴ *Watch* 100; *Hor.* 404.21-22 *monstra marina in effigie humana*.

²⁰⁵ In his "summary" of the various chapter in the second part of the *Horologium*, Suso refers to this chapter as *materiam de mails religiosis*, the "chapter about the bad religious," *Watch* 312; *Hor.* 588.27.

numerus electorum). “Just and pious,” it is said, the *electi* are as “lights shining in this world” in the midst of a “crooked and perverse generation.”²⁰⁶ These are people “who conduct themselves among others like ‘lambs among wolves’” and who “(...) give out a sweet fragrance of virtue in their bearing of adversities. These are they whom the lord has reserved for himself.”²⁰⁷

An often found expression in the *Horologium* is that the world is “growing old.”²⁰⁸ In the vision of the city in ruins and the explanation following it we see a strong awareness of the present time (*moderni temporis*) as distinct from, and distinctly worse than the past.²⁰⁹ The *civitatis ruinae*, that is, the present condition, is put in contrast to the early Church, literally a “golden age” (*aurea tempora*) of pure devotion.²¹⁰ Ideals such as love, humility, obedience, patience—virtues that were seen to have governed the life of the primitive church—were now in serious decay.²¹¹ Indeed this had been commonplace in medieval religious literature ever since the high Middle Ages, but the notion of living in the end of times must have been particularly strong around the fourteenth century, the time of numerous well known crises (wars, plagues, earthquakes, new heretical movements, a Church in ‘Babylonian captivity,’ and so on)—joined by apocalyptic interpretations.²¹² For

²⁰⁶ *Hor.* 409.4; *Watch* 105-6.

²⁰⁷ *Watch* 106; *Hor.* 409.12-14 *Et hi inter alios sicut ‘agni inter lupos’* [Lk 10.3] *se habentes, sicut ‘lilium inter spinas,’* [Cant 2.2.] *odorem virtutum ex tolerantia reddunt adversitatum. Hi sunt quo reservavit sibi dominus (...)*

²⁰⁸ See, e.g., *Watch* 176; 178; and II, 1; II, 2 in relation to death. For this theme, see also Haas (1989b), pp. 50-55, and chapter three in this study.

²⁰⁹ The world, according to the *Horologium*, is “foolish” in general but particularly evil and vain in “these modern times.” See *Watch* 323; *Hor.* 598.10-11. Giles Constable asserts that the “...sense of ‘our’ or modern times emerged in the second half of the eleventh century and brought with it (and may have been partly produced by) a realization of historical change and of the difference between the past and the present, which was usually seen in a less favourable light than the past. Almost everyone in the eleventh and twelfth centuries thought that the world was growing old and that things were going from bad to worse as the end approached.” Constable (1996), p. 162.

²¹⁰ *Watch* 104-5; *Hor.* 408.4-15.

²¹¹ The idea of the Early Church as a pure condition of spiritual fervor and community, an idea inspired by late antiquity and especially the Desert fathers, is a commonplace in high medieval reform ideology and was used extensively in the writings of the twelfth-century monastic reformers, as demonstrated by Giles Constable (1996), pp. 159-61.

²¹² The fourteenth century as a period of crisis, see especially Graus (1980). For discussion of flagellants, plagues, and so on, as factors of religious anxiety, see Dinzelbacher (1996), p. 136. Many late medieval theologians saw abuses of the Church and the period of schism as a large scale

Suso, however, the “bad religious” (*mala religiosus*) is the most telling indication of near turnover. Their lack of devotional fervor and entanglement in worldly affairs, especially in “philosophical niceties” of the schools, is held as a “sure sign” (*certum indicium* and *verissimum paraesagium*) of approaching calamities.²¹³ With Suso’s portrayal of these “sea monsters” a traditional notion comes to the fore: bad Catholics had for a long time been seen as a significant branch of the devil’s party.²¹⁴ As the end of the world draws near, Suso asserts, “the ancient enemy prevails over men.”²¹⁵ The devil, according to Thomas Aquinas and *opinio communis*, had infiltrated the hierarchies of the world, and as the world was drawing to an end, the devil was raging.²¹⁶ In numerous passages throughout the *Horologium* Suso indicates that the world has ‘gone mad’ (*hoc mundo insanianissimus*).

Suso evokes a series of images of a world in crisis, full of signs of impending calamities. The story of the Ram who tyrannizes the people of God was mentioned above. There are tribulations both on a large scale, as the “tribulations of the Church,”²¹⁷ but, most important, it seems, are tribulations in the sense of hardships of everyday life that make the conditions for sincere personal devotion. The poor condition of “modern times” is manifested in that people who want to pursue a life of true devotion are persecuted and scorned.²¹⁸ The bad religious in the vision of the city have not only shut Christ out from their hearts, but also “from

tentatio, a final temptation that marked the end of times, the impending judgment, or alternatively, the transition to a new “age of the spirit,” as was the case with the radical Franciscans.

²¹³ See *Watch* 102; *Hor.* 405-6, here esp. 406.4-5; *certum indicium (...) verissimum praesagium futurae in proximo calamitatis*.

²¹⁴ Alcuin (d. 804) in his commentary on the Apocalypse gave a fourfold scheme of the Devil’s party: Heathens, Jews, heretics, and the bad Catholics. See Dinzelbacher (1996), p. 31. In Suso’s vision of Hell (I, 10) the various *falsi christiani* are found to be in unspeakable torment. Those who have insulted and persecuted friends of God are treated separately and have their own special punishment, being eternally “gnawed at by the dogs of hell.” *Watch* 158; *Hor.* 456.18-21.

²¹⁵ *Watch* 108; *Hor.* 411.15-17 *Hostis antiquus appropinquante eius termino, tantum praevalere apud multos evidenter cognoscitur*.

²¹⁶ Dinzelbacher (1996), p. 127; see also pp. 98-9.

²¹⁷ *Watch* 109; 412.8 *O sacrosancta mater ecclesia, quanta erit tunc tribulatio tua?* It was not uncommon in this period to regard spiritual deterioration, corruption among prelates or more concrete events such as the Avignon schism, as large-scale *tentationes* of the Church, and major signs of turn-over.

²¹⁸ *Watch* 104-8; *Hor.* 408-11.

the hearts of other men.” As the *electi* stretch out their hand to aid the pilgrim they are hindered by the other inhabitants of the city. The person who wants to “follow in the paths of the ancient fathers,” in Suso’s view a most praiseworthy decision, “would endure scorn,” he would be accused of seeking attention, and “he would have to suffer many reproaches.”²¹⁹

Envy, scorn, blasphemy, persecution: these are characteristic forms of tribulation that befall the elect in the world. Against this background of extinguished religious zeal and a climate where true devotion is rejected and even scorned, adversity and endurance are outlined as the main principle of sincere devotion, the hallmark of true inner intention in the midst of un-devout surroundings: the God-sent adversities help cultivating the inner *habitus* necessary to persevere and not be caught in the “whirl of things” in this world.

Tribulatio and Moral Criticism

To portray religious decadence and thus to stimulate an awareness of this problem is a primary concern for Suso in the *Horologium*. In addition to the *planctus ecclesiae* part and its vision of the city in ruins (I, 5) we find extensive treatments of the theme spiritual decay also in other parts. It is worth noticing that such parts are either altogether new to the *Horologium*, or significantly expanded from the *Bdew* version.²²⁰ A number of motives are engaged when Suso portrays religious decadence: hollow and dry scholastic disputes (*querulositas*), pursuits of honor and worldly privileges (*ambitio saeculi*),²²¹ bad leadership in ‘the world’ or within the religious orders (II, 1). The ideal attitude of the elect, their bearing of adversities, is held as a contrast to those who pursue their studies only in order to achieve privileges, to be “free to obtain the bodily ease they desired, and have every license to do as they pleased without opposition.”²²² In a portrayal of contemporary fashion in chapter twelve of book one, Suso also targets the more conspicuous

²¹⁹ For ‘bad religious’ presenting impediments for the truly devout, see also I, 12, esp. *Watch* 179; *Hor.* 424.19-21.

²²⁰ Kunzle (1977), pp. 47-9.

²²¹ *Hor.* 521.14-19; *Watch* 236.

²²² *Watch* 236; *Hor.* 521.24-522.1.

signs of decadence: pointed shoes, suits tightly worn around the arms, or the toga-like outfits worn by some people “to resemble philosophers.”²²³ Such vanity is, of course, outrageous. However, even worse is the bad religious who with their ‘shine’ of decency try to conceal an inner depravity. The inhabitants of the *civitas ruinae*, as seen above, are not monstrous in appearance, but rather monsters in human appearance (*in effigie humana*). Suso very often speaks of an outer ‘shine’, or religious appearance, in contrast to true inner intention. Religious hypocrisy can often be expressed simply as “religious habit.”²²⁴ They wear the religious habit on the outside, but on the inside they are void of grace and devotion.²²⁵ In fact, as they have lost both the world and God,²²⁶ such people represent a kind of ‘double decay’ and represent, it seems, an epitome of the current state of affairs.²²⁷

The contrast of outer appearance and inner intention and the outright demonization of religious hypocrisy is a striking and prevalent feature in the *Horologium*.²²⁸ Throughout, this is a *moral* critique. It is a response to what seems to have been perceived as a ‘moral crisis’ of eschatological dimensions. With his emphasis on inner virtues of patience in adversity in contrast to outer appearance and worldly pursuits, the teaching of the *Horologium* displays a strong moralizing

²²³ See *Watch* 177-8; in II, 1, demons in the form of “black Ethiopians” present worldly temptations to the people of the schools: “To some they showed gold and silver and vast possessions. Some they clothed in long and gaily-colored robes, and put fine hoods on their heads, and sent them off along the path of ambition.”

²²⁴ *Bdew: gaistlicher schin* Planctus esp. *Watch* 100-109; See also the use of *speciem ... pietatis* (II Tm 3.5) in II, 1, (523.30).

²²⁵ *Hor.* 408.24-5 *interius autem gratia et devotione vacui sunt*, which stands in contrast to the “fullness of graces” and the “visitations” of the suffering elect. In MHD: *Gaistlicher schin*. See also II, 1, 524.9-13 *non videbant vermem, qui interioria vitae spiritualis corrodit; sed solummodo solliciti erant, qualiter de foris sibi pariter ac subditis suis quandam honestam vitam ad salutem praecise sufficientem. vivificatorio autem spiritu deintus carentem compingere possent*. i.e. the lack of inner devotion is concealed by a life that only *simulates* that which is “just sufficient for salvation,” *Watch* 239-40.

²²⁶ *Watch* 312; the “... tepid or frivolous religious is to be mourned over, for he is somehow more wretched than all creatures, for he lacks both God and the world.” “They are compared to a city in ruins...” *Hor.* 588.29-30 *... quod religious tepidus vel vanus est lamentabilis, quia miserabilior quodam modo omnibus creaturis, scilicet carens Deo et mundo. Comparatur civitati ruinosae*.

²²⁷ *Hor.* 412.6-7 *Cum hi, qui mundo hoc abrenuntiaverunt, tot nisu mundana sequuntur?* *Hor.* 412.6-7.

²²⁸ See Matt. 23.26f. Harsh criticism and even demonization of an ‘outer shine’ of religiosity is commonplace in medieval religious thought and ‘reform language’.

tendency which has been observed by many scholars as a characteristic aspect of late medieval piety.²²⁹ The “corroded” inner life that is so strongly criticized is, of course, an absolute contrast to the *vera contritio* and the true inner fervor that Suso promotes throughout his book. It is likely that he found support for his moral critique in teachings such that of Meister Eckhart, who emphasized intention and love in a resolute criticism of outer works of piety.²³⁰ Eckhart’s criticism is part of his well-known radical, neo-platonic teaching, which was not commonplace at all; but it shares the moralistic tone and the criticism of ‘outer works’ that seen in a number of treatises concerned with devotional life from this period. A resounding message in this period was that outer works were worthless as long as they were performed without the *recta intentio*, the “right intention.”²³¹

Patience in adversity, Suso’s main idea, expresses the same principle of having the right inner intention. *Recta intentio* calls to mind the individual moral choice that pious life built on. But we may also notice that Suso’s criticism of contemporary trends not only focuses on *personal* salvation. For instance, his criticism is also directed toward leaders of the order, who with pomp and display are bad examples to their subordinates.²³² “For men who have lost their fervor to be reformed (*reduci*),” Suso says that it is necessary that others act as good examples. Hence, ‘outer works’ can have an important edifying function.²³³ Similarly, by sustaining attacks from others in patience and humility, it is said that the devotee also *edifies* his adversaries. As will be seen shortly, to do “nothing to those

²²⁹ See Angenendt et al. (1995), p. 61 n. 361 with further references.

²³⁰ Whereas Eckhart’s moralism is accompanied by, even founded on, a speculative teaching on detachment (*abegescheidenheit*) as the necessary condition for encounter with the godhead in the ground of the soul, Suso, in the *Horologium*, is not concerned with mystical speculation at all. For key passages in Eckhart, see *RdU* 11, *Werke* II, pp. 364-70; and 16 and 23, *Werke* II pp. 380-83; 418-33. Meister Eckhart also direct his criticism against a ‘calculating’ piety and multiplicity of spiritual exercises (“gezählte Frömmigkeit”) in a neoplatonic spirit, by referring to multiplicity as distance from God’s unity and simplicity. See Angenendt et al. (1995). p. 58. Whereas Eckhart’s moralism is accompanied by, even founded on, a speculative teaching on detachment (*abegescheidenheit*) as the necessary condition for encounter with the godhead in the ground of the soul, Suso, in the *Horologium*, is not concerned with mystical speculation at all.

²³¹ See Angenendt et al. (1995), p. 57.

²³² See Senner (1994), p. 22.

²³³ *Watch* 239; *Hor.* 525.2-4 *Quasi impossibile esse, homines indevotos solis reduci verbis, sed magis operibus bonis et vivis exemplis.*

who attack you” (I, 13) is a simple formulation of a passive, yet *demonstrative* exercise of the virtue of patience in a way that is seen to be fruitful also for one’s neighbor.²³⁴ To deal with hardship is a way to moral refinement and hence a process of self-perfection; at the same time it brings spiritual help for the next man (*aedificare proximorum*), another main element of devotion in the *Horologium sapientiae*.²³⁵ In the most critical parts of the *Horologium*, Suso attacks contemporary school theology and especially those who seek learning for the sake of their own promotion and not for the sake of *aedificationem aliorum*.

Querulositas: Tribulation and the ‘Crisis of Theology’

With Suso’s school criticism we can see many tenets of a traditional ‘sapiential theology’.²³⁶ The idea of a ‘school of wisdom’ as a sharp contrast to the schools of the world is well known from the works of Bernard of Clairvaux and his conflicts with the early scholastics of the cathedral schools in that period.²³⁷ *Tribulatio* is suggested as a ‘schooling’ of the spirit, and it is even called a *doctrinx*. All this suggests an experiential concept of learning which is so typical to monastic theology of the Middle Ages. However, the situation in Suso’s time was also very different from the time of Bernard. Fourteenth-century Europe experienced a strong growth in the number of universities and new opportunities for academic

²³⁴ Berndt Hamm has spoken of a tendency of “Selbstpastorat der Frommen” (cited in Angenendt (2005), p. 190).

²³⁵ Christoph Burger (1986) observed the idea of *aedificatio* as a main tenet in the theology of Jean Gerson. It plays an important part also in Suso. *Aedificatio, fructus, utilitas*, the terms that gave the title to Burger’s book, occur often in the *Horologium*. The use of *aedificatio* in relation to one’s neighbor is indeed a traditional concept. According to the *Regula Magistri*, the precursor to the *Rule of Benedict*, the monk shall become a useful brother (*utilis frater*), an idea that in turn echoes the “outer darkness” Mt 25.30, of the useless man. See Bernstein (2000). In line with this traditional metaphor Suso emphasizes that the patient sufferer is ‘shining out,’ as the suffering Christ is present in him. See more on this below.

²³⁶ See Haas (1993), p. 98 n.12.

²³⁷ See Ulrich (1994), p. 124-5 with further references. Bernard of Clairvaux, in one of his Sermons on the Song of Songs, famously states *Disce christiane a Christo, quomodo diligas Christi*, “Learn, Christian, from Christ, how to love Christ” SCC 20 (my trans.). See also Ruh (1996) p.443.

careers and accompanying privileges.²³⁸ In part the new centers of learning tended to develop autonomous and ‘secularized’ spheres within society, which was perceived as a threat to the unity of the Church.²³⁹ Moreover, the period saw a development within the theological schools that did not comply with the high scholastic system of knowledge.

In his visionary portrayal of the bad religious Suso conveys a sharp criticism of academic ambitions and “subtleties,” which he saw as a most damaging current in his time. Whereas some are concerned with studies only in order to gain privileges, others are hopelessly engaged in pointless philosophical disputes. Among the many signs of crisis seen in the *planctus* vision with its city in ruins, it is specifically “philosophical niceties” (*querulositas*)²⁴⁰ and “dangerous dissensions” in which these bad religious are involved that are held as the most “sure sign” (*certum indicium*) of approaching calamities.²⁴¹ A more elaborated portrayal of this theme is seen in the chapter that opens Book II; here a spectacular vision of contemporary sciences is painted out. The narrator ridicules the theologians in this school who are quarreling about who shall possess a precious silver ball, which means the truth of Sacred Scripture.²⁴²

Suso was not alone in perceiving a crisis at the universities in this period. Several of the Avignon popes during the first half of the fourteenth century felt the threat of nominalism against established scholastic theology. Suso’s idea of a sound theology is in many respects conservative; it is very often in correspondence with the high scholasticism and the teaching of Thomas and Bonaventure. Thus, when Suso criticizes people who seek what is necessary for salvation *in actu scholastico* this is not a rejection of scholasticism in its ‘classical’ sense.²⁴³

²³⁸ The number of schools that provided the *studium generale* in Europe was almost doubled between 1290 and the mid 1300’s. Borst (1988), pp. 377-93, here esp. p. 382. The number of universities went from thirteen in 1300 to 28 in 1378. Leppin (2007b), p. 161.

²³⁹ See Borst (1988), pp. 377-79.

²⁴⁰ See also *Watch* 312-13; *Hor.* 589.

²⁴¹ See *Watch* 102; *Hor.* 405-6 *certum indicium*, (...) *verissimum praesagium futurae in proximo calamitatis*.

²⁴² *Watch* 236-41; *Hor.* 522-26.

²⁴³ *in actu scholastico ea, quae ad salutem necessaria sunt, quaerunt. Hor.* 525.33-526.1; *Watch* 240-41.

The teaching of Aquinas was declared mandatory for Dominicans by the end of the thirteenth century and Suso adheres to it quite conscientiously.²⁴⁴ The “subtleties” often referred to in the *Horologium* point to more recent developments within the schools and especially to the questioning of the teaching of Aquinas that had begun in the early fourteenth century. In the vision of the schools in II, 1, the disciple sees various figures who are trying to possess the silver ball (i.e. the Truth of Scripture), and who are also attacking the one who holds it, Thomas Aquinas, “with pointed arrows and hard stones.”²⁴⁵ Just as those who want to follow “in the path of the ancient fathers” are scorned, the schools are hostile environments for adherents of ‘classic’ theology. We said above that Suso responds to what he holds as a moral crisis. With this portrayal of the schools, where the established system of knowledge and its balance of theology and philosophy is threatened by ‘new opinions,’ we may recall the concept used by Berndt Hamm: theologians of piety reacted against a ‘crisis of rationality’ and tried to steer their audiences’ attention toward more fruitful forms of devotion.²⁴⁶

The Disciple wanders through the various divisions of the schools and, as the vision culminates, reaches the highest point, the true school of Christ. Here Suso outlines his understanding of a theology of wisdom, *philosophia spiritualis*, which claims unity of life and learning, and which, like for Bernard of Clairvaux

²⁴⁴ For an overview of Suso’s use of the works of Aquinas in the *Horologium*, see Imbach (1994); Künzle (1977), p. 97. An intriguing exception from Suso’s faithful adherence to Aquinas is seen, however in his indulgence teaching, as Angenendt (1980) has shown. See more on this below, pp. 97-105.

²⁴⁵ Bizet held the adversaries of Thomas in II, 1 to be the *moderni*, that is, Wilhelm of Ockham and his followers. Kurt Ruh, (1996), p. 443, agrees. Künzle, on the other hand, thinks that Suso alludes to a Dominican theologian, Durandus of St. Porcain, see (1977), pp. 47-8. The mention of attacks against Thomas with hard stones may be a word play around the name Durandus. *Hor.* 522.12 ...*nunc sagittas acutas, nunc lapides duros iacentes*; Etienne Gilson, (1955/1989), pp. 473-4, mentions a derogatory wordplay on the “Hard-hearted Durandus” that was said to have been proposed for his epitaph: *Durus Durandus iacet hic sub marmore duro / An sit salvandus ego nescio, nec quoque curo*. He was clearly an unpopular character. Suso’s *sagittas acutas* have a parallel in the demon who attacks the servant with arrows in the *Vita*; that is to say, Suso clearly demonizes the attacker of Thomas, whoever this might be. Alois Haas, (1996), pp. 85-6, reminds us that it need not be the well-known conflict of school traditions that Suso had in mind, but simply contemporary school theology and its irrelevance for true piety.

²⁴⁶ The term “Rationalitätskrise” was introduced by Walter Sparr and applied by Berndt Hamm on an earlier period, see Hamm (1999), pp. 9-10 with further references.

and a long tradition of monastic theology, holds Christ as its teacher.²⁴⁷ Suso has an integrative understanding of fruitful learning that includes a ‘canon’ of major theologians who for him seem to have formed a sound and fruitful balance of philosophy and theology; he adheres to the teaching of Thomas Aquinas and demonizes his attackers, and he often reveals a strong influence from Bonaventure.²⁴⁸ This does not mean, however, that his way of ‘doing philosophy’ is similar to that of high scholasticism. For Suso, true philosophy is *practical* and complete; it is, in a sense, another formulation of Christian life itself.²⁴⁹ Most importantly, it is Christ centered.²⁵⁰ Just like the tribulatio teaching, Suso’s idea of philosophy is held as a simple and complete teaching, one that comprises everything that is useful for salvation. Needless to say, this is not the kind of philosophy that is pursued in the schools mentioned above, unlike the unfruitful (*fructu ... carent*) and sterile (*steriles*) endeavors that are seen to pervade the schools.²⁵¹

Suso was informed and inspired by a much older and quite different direction of thought and practice. Another objection seen in the critical ‘school chapter’ is that the philosophers of Suso’s own time do not acknowledge the Desert Fathers, and especially Arsenius, who for Suso presented a *summa summarum* of true philosophy.²⁵² Suso’s ‘rediscovery’ of Arsenius is a key inspiration for his own idea of a *philosophia spiritualis*, “spiritual philosophy.”²⁵³

²⁴⁷ See Bernard von Clairvaux, *Sermones super Cantica Cantorum* and the famous phrase *haec mea subtilior, interior philosophia, scire Iesum, et hunc crucifixum*. SCC 6, 43.21-2; see also 5, 116.17.

²⁴⁸ See Ruh (1996), p. 455, with references.

²⁴⁹ “My teaching will itself be your life,” eternal Wisdom announces in the beginning of Book II. *Watch* 242; *Hor.* 526.24-25 *Doctrina mea, ipsa erit vita tua*.

²⁵⁰ See Kaiser (1994); Ruh (1996), p. 442.

²⁵¹ *Hor.* 523.5-7 *Et proinde fiunt improbationes, replicationes et opiniorum novitates mirabiles, quae magis in admirationem ducunt, quam utilitati proficiant audientium ... 31-33 Et tamen velut ficus fatua, quae foliis quodam abundat, fructu autem caret, modicum in populo fructum dederunt. Quippe homines verborum foliis abundantes, fructu devotionis steriles remanserunt. Watch* 237 “And so they manufacture refutations, rejoinders and astonishing new-fangled opinions, which do more to surprise those who hear them than to give them anything useful. (...) like some useless fig tree, which has indeed many leaves but lacks fruit, they gave little benefit to the people. (...) their words (...) remained sterile in the fruit of devotion.”

²⁵² *Hor.* 523.14-19 *Nam libros sanctorum patrum, qui olim vigente religione et florente devotione in usu erant, sicut collationes patrum et similia devotionis germina ... spernentes; Watch* 238 “For they spurned the writings of the holy fathers, which in times past, when religious life was strong and devotion flourished, were in constant use, such as *The Conferences of the*

It is interesting to see that in Suso's conception of wisdom, he may hold Christ as a teacher, but he may also describe *tribulatio* a *doctrinx*, as we observed earlier. Both tribulation/adversity and Christ's passion are referred to as a "book," as "teaching," or as a "school."²⁵⁴ This close relationship between the idea of tribulation and Suso's Christ-centered theology will be discussed more fully below. Let us now consider a passage from one of the main 'tribulation chapters' (I, 13). Here, Suso formulates his teaching on *tribulatio* in contrast to the "philosophical niceties" and scientific endeavors for which he accuses his contemporaries:

So you may have blossomed out as a student of astrology, you may have penetrated every secret of the liberal arts, you may have seemed wonderful in your mastery of all wisdom, you may have outstripped every rhetorician and dialectician in eloquence and subtlety, but this will not bring you a good life as will that one thing which is necessary for salvation, that is to abandon yourself out of "love from a pure heart and a good conscience and an unfeigned faith" (1. Tim 1.5.) and to commit yourself wholly to God in every tribulation, and patiently to conform yourself to his will. All that is common to the good and the bad, but this can only be in his elect. Such is the preeminence of eternal glory over every temporal and transi-

Fathers." For Arsenius' philosophy as *summa summarum*, see 545.5, see also *Hor.* 546-47; *Watch* 264; for comments see Künzle (1977); See Williams / Kaiser (1987), p. 131.

²⁵³ Suso's idea of a *philosophia spiritualis* has received some attention recently. See various contributions in Blumruich / Kaiser (eds.) (1994); see also McGinn (2005a), pp. 204-17, with references; and Haas (1993) p. 98.

Suso is usually not given much attention in generic treatments of medieval philosophy, except as someone who is "testifying to the lasting influence of Meister Eckhart's doctrine on souls whose spiritual life was certainly very noble," Gilson (1955/89), p. 443; see also 758, n.28, where Suso's philosophical position is characterized as "weaker restatements of those of Eckhart," with reference to the *Buchlein der warheit*. Kurt Flasch, (1988/2000), pp. 495-503, has found it unsatisfactory that only scholastics, either traditional or 'modern,' have been treated as philosophers of the fourteenth century. Flasch points to Petrarcha, who, around the same time as Suso, objects to the philosophy of the English "barbarians" in Paris and their logic. Petrarcha, like Suso, explicitly claims a 'philosophical' alternative; both argue for a moral philosophy based on ancient masters, and without denying the authority of Aristotle. In addition, importantly, both seem to have had a position and style so different from the jargon and practice of the schools that actual discussion would have been impossible, and was not desired. In a similar pattern these two authors invoke, in part from ancient sources, what they present as a true moral philosophy that unites life and learning. Suso's story in *Hor.* II, 3, where the Disciple 'rediscovers' an ancient master (the Desert Father Arsenius) and, in this work, a true and morally adequate philosophy—neglected by the "modern" schools—has a proto-renaissance spirit to it. In the thirteenth century, thus, quite similar critical positions with a philosophical claim arise independent of each other, which suggests that the 'crisis of rationality' in this particular period was widely perceived. See Hamm, as in above p. 65, n. 246.

²⁵⁴ See above, p. 40n; see *Watch* 202; *Hor.* 494.10-14.

tory suffering that anyone who takes care to see things as they are should rather choose to want to be tormented for years “in a furnace of burning fire” (Dn 3.6) than wish to be deprived of the smallest reward reserved for him in the future; for labor has its end, the reward has no end.²⁵⁵

Once again, we may observe that the concept of tribulation is used as a key term of distinction. A “good life” is here held as a life governed by that which is “necessary for salvation.” Again, we see that both *electi* and *tribulatio* plays a central role when Suso formulates such a “sum” of devotion that has salvation as its sole aim. This is a superb form of wisdom that is unattainable through the disciplines of the schools; these are basically blind alleys, “common to the good and the bad,”²⁵⁶ and essentially unfruitful. Scientific endeavors are common to the good and bad, that is to say they have no real power of distinction, whereas the way of the elect is a way distinct by its inner, moral superiority (“a good life”). Only the elect, who offer their tribulations to God and appropriate His will, are truly distinguished, although this distinction may not be recognized by all.²⁵⁷

Tribulations are despised by “this insane world” (*hoc mundo insanissimo*),²⁵⁸ but praised by those who consider their benefits. In essence, the path of tribulation, as a work of God’s omnipotence, cannot be scrutinized *in actu scholastico*, but still it can be understood by those who are trained in the right “spiritual philosophy,” which means to learn by experience and to “rise above temporal things” and to view one’s place in the bigger scheme of things. The end of the previous

²⁵⁵ Watch 194-95 Hor. 487.11-23 *Denique si in astrologica disciplina floreret, et omnium liberalium artium secreta penetraret; si admirabilis in omni sapientia appareret; si cunctos rhetores ac dialecticos facundia et argutiis praeires: haec omnia non tantum ad bonam tibi vitam conferrent, quantum hoc unum ad salutem necessarium, scilicet ex 'caritate de corde puro et conscientia bona et fide non ficta' te ipsum deserere, et totum te Deo in omni tribulatione committere, eiusque voluntati parere patienter. Nam illud bonis et malis commune est; istud autem solis electis inesse potest. Tanta est praeeminencia aeternae gloriae ad temporales ac transitorias passiones, ut diligens perspector deberet potius eligere multis annis 'in fornace ignis ardentis' velle torqueri, quam minimum praemio in futurum sibi reservato velle privari; quia labor ucm fine, merces sine fine.*

²⁵⁶ Watch 195; Hor. 487.18-19.

²⁵⁷ Hor. 491.15-17 *Verumtamen hoc solum de cunctis praemissis a memoria tua non excidat, quod tribulati vocantur ab hoc mundo miseri, sed a me censentur beati; quia mecum sine fine sunt regnaturi.* Watch 199 “But of all the things that have been said, let at least not this escape from your memory, that those who know tribulation are called wretched by this world, but I count them blessed, for they are to reign with me without end.”

²⁵⁸ Watch 195; Hor. 488.15.

extract shows that the efforts of the sciences are contrasted to seeing “things as they really are.” The claim to consider life *sub specie aeternitatis* is another classical tenet of sapiential theology.²⁵⁹ The sciences are seriously flawed because they accommodate worldly pursuits in stead of the necessary meditation on the after-life; for the same reason, they are not in compliance with true devotion because this blindness makes them unable to realize the benefits of worldly tribulations in an ‘afterlife perspective’. In Suso’s teaching on *tribulatio*, the eschatological dimension is always at hand, as will be seen also below.

Tribulatio and the Weakness of Devotion

In contrast to the bleak visions of religious decay that we have considered, other parts of the *Horologium* express a much more optimistic tone, especially regarding personal devotional reorientation (often articulated as “renewal of love”²⁶⁰) aided by simple forms of devotion such as prayers to the passion or devotion to the name of Jesus. A life of true devotion is certainly not easy, for many reasons, and steps are taken to aid the weak devotee in his daily life. The same effort can be seen in some uses of the *tribulatio* term.

As seen above, the *Horologium* emphasizes a *variety* of tribulations for the elect (*mille modis*). The ideal of patience in adversity is one major aspect of the ‘tribulatio complex,’ outlined as a distinct attitude toward the world and the challenges it presents to devotional life. Suso’s language of personal reform uses the battle metaphor and encourages the *miles Christi* to mobilize strength in adversity; it offers motivation to “stand up” and to compare one’s sufferings with those of the martyrs, the patriarchs, and with the passion of Christ. Such language suggests a heroic spirituality; but often we seen that this is response is adjusted to a “spirituality of weakness” and challenges that are quite unspectacular compared to the martyrs. Suso encourages reflection about experiences of spiritual insufficiency in

²⁵⁹ See Grosse (1994), e.g., p. 114.

²⁶⁰ See especially *Horologium* II, 7.

everyday life, and means of interpreting this within a framework of divine affliction of God's elect friends.

The Disciple plays the role of someone who wants to aspire among the elect, but who struggles with weakness, anxiety and inability in his devotional life.²⁶¹ Through the voice of the Disciple and the responses of Eternal Wisdom, the book reflects on the inability of humans to do what was considered to be worthy. The passion was seen as an act of love toward humans that called for a proper response. A problem often reflected in the *Horologium* is *duritia*, 'hardness of heart', which makes it difficult to give a worthy response to God and the passion. The problem of spiritual insufficiency²⁶² is a characteristic issue in the *Horologium* and its precursor, the *Buchlein der ewigen weisheit* (*Bdew*). The state of weakness in affection is portrayed in the opening of the *Horologium*: A young monk is standing before the crucifix, unable to respond to it in a proper way, whereupon he is put in ecstasy and taught about the "Hundred meditations," simple prayers that are to be recited daily in order to "stir up devotion." The problem of spiritual insufficiency and hardness of heart is thus presented as the 'literary occasion' for entire *Bdew*/*Horologium* dialogue. A main goal for Suso is to provide strategies and exercises that facilitate a worthy and "fervid love for that Passion."²⁶³ Another strategy of encouragement is seen in the identification *duritia* as another one of God's tribulations, and thus as a sign of election. A good example of this is seen in the second part of the *Horologium* (II, 4), where Suso addresses the problem of lacking devotion in relation to the Eucharistic sacrament.

²⁶¹ As is more clearly seen in the *Bdew* version, the whole work is set off by the servant's inability to pray and feel devotion when he stands before a crucifix, see *Bdew* 196.4-197.1, *Exemplar* 207-208, which in turn introduces the visionary mediation of the "hundred meditations" that form the last part of the *Bdew*. The episode is also mentioned in the prologue to the *Horologium*, see *Watch* 57; *Hor.* 369.5-370.11.

²⁶² See the chapter "inadequacy and volition" in Hamm (2004), pp. 88-127.

²⁶³ *affectum tam fervidum ad suam passionem, prout dignum esset.* *Hor.* 369.4-370.2; *Watch* 57. One such strategy is seen in the advice of keeping the name of Jesus on a piece of clothing and thus making him present in one's memory, as seen in the introduction to this study. See also *Watch* 319; see above pp. 14-18. The explicit aim of this chapter in the *Hor.* is to offer procedures of devotion "which are so moderated that they need not bring with them any difficulty." For more on this theme and comments on I, 14 in the *Horologium*, see Hamm (2004), pp. 107-8.

Eternal Wisdom explains that there may be many reasons for this condition, and that

(...) the experts have said a lot about this, but let us ignore them (...) whenever you do not find by careful self-examination that you have been the cause of this but that you have done your part, and that if such hardness of spirit is still present in you it is by God's permission, for he is accustomed to afflict his elect in a thousand different ways.²⁶⁴

The reference to doing “your part” (*quod tuum erat fecisti*) is a good example of how Suso in the *Horologium* takes a concept from scholastic tradition, what Heiko Oberman called the “golden rule of grace,” the *facere quod in se est*, and applies it to a simple form of edification and consolation.²⁶⁵

Duritia or related states of devotional deficiency or weakness in devotion (*subtractio devotionis*) had been well-known to monastic psychology for many centuries.²⁶⁶ The problem of weakness in devotion is traditionally interpreted as another *tenatio*.²⁶⁷ In this case, in addition to the scholastic axiom that gives promise of God's cooperation with humans, the *duritia* problem is connected to the formula that we have already seen: “God is accustomed to afflict his friends” in many ways (*electos suos mille modis tribulare consuevit*). Again we may observe how the *electi* category is used as a means of self-identification for the devout, and that God's afflictions are *signs* of this election. *Duritia*, in the sense of ‘hardness of heart,’ difficulty of engaging proper devotion, is another important dimension of the tribulation complex, adding to its variety. The *tribulatio* concept pro-

²⁶⁴ Watch 289; Hor. 569.21-26 *Multis ex causis atque modis duritia talis animam devotam affligere consuevit, ut expertorum exstat sententia, quibus omnibus praetermissis, hoc solum teneas, ut quandocumque per diligentem inquisitionem te eidem causam dedisse non inveneris, sed quod tuum erat fecisti, si super hoc mentis duritia permissione divina emerit, qui electos suos mille modis tribulare consuevit.*

²⁶⁵ Oberman (1992), p. 215 ; see Watch 328; those who are for some reason weak or “worldly minded” can perform their prayers with an “implicit intention” and this is sufficient; Hor. 603.18-19. *et haec faciant illa intentione implicite ... et sufficit.* See Künzle (1977), p. 567-8, with further references; *STh* I-II, q 109, a. 6, ad 2; See Hamm (2009), pp. 46-8. See more on this point in Chapter Two in this study.

²⁶⁶ See Leclercq (1961/2009), p. 31. For studies of the theories of emotions in theological thought from late antiquity to the Middle Ages, see Knuuttila (2004) and Bernstein (2000).

²⁶⁷ See TRE 2, pp. 392-4.

vides in this case means of interpreting everyday unspectacular religious feelings of inadequacy within a framework of divine election.

As Suso was well aware, this condition of *duritia* could come close to passivity and even melancholy. In chapter fourteen, we read about a “Certain disciple” who was struck by a “certain inordinate sorrow”; he was “oppressed so mortally that he could not read or pray or do any good deed at such times.”²⁶⁸ This, in turn, was dangerously close to states of depression and *desperatio*, in which people were overwhelmed by religious qualms and were in danger of losing their hope in salvation.²⁶⁹ Chapter thirteen opens with a long speech by the Disciple, who recalls his states of deep frustration: “For this savage tribulation afflicted me so that ‘there was but one step, as I may say, between me and death’ (1kgs 20.3).” States of depression and total passivity and ‘religious paralysis’ are often discussed in Suso’s works.²⁷⁰ Words such as *tristitia*, *gemitus*, *amaritudine*, *maeror*, *dolor* occur frequently. Part of the tribulation complex is also such *inordinate* emotions, especially *tristitia inordinata*, “inordinate sorrow.”²⁷¹ Much effort is invested in dealing with such potentially dangerous emotional states. “For when you sing your songs so sweetly, the spirit oppressed with sadness is lightened and your heavenly melody drives sorrow’s recollection from the spirit (*animus tristitia pressus alleviatur*), at least for the time, so that it may bear its sufferings more easily.”²⁷²

A principal remedy against such emotional difficulties is to direct the attention away from oneself and toward Christ. For instance, Suso encourages the

²⁶⁸ *Watch* 204; *Hor.* 495.29-496.2.

²⁶⁹ See *Watch* 95: “(...) do you not know that despair is a dangerous matter?” *Hor.* 400.1. *An ignoras quoniam periculosa res est desperatio?*

²⁷⁰ Suso’s *Vita* speaks of the inordinate sadness (*Ungeordnetü trurkeit*) that afflicted the Servant in his younger days; they were so hard on his mind that it felt as if a mountain was placed on his chest, and they lasted for eight full years. See *Vita* 62.1-3., seems to be a direct equivalent to *tristitia inordinata*. For a discussion of “Schwermutigkeit” and melancholy in Suso’s works, see Haas (1996), here esp. pp. 107-11.

²⁷¹ See, e.g., *Watch* 169; 204; *Hor* 466.22-23; 495.27; 582.7; see also *Watch* 187; 195; *Hor.* 480.17.24.26; 488.2.

²⁷² But also, if the states of sorrow are not too severe, the *Horologium* indicates that music might be a good form of therapy, see *Watch* 184-5. Music was considered helpful against depression by Avicenna, who, for centuries, was the authority on medicine in the Medieval West. See Knuuttila (2004).

reader to focus attention on the immense sorrows that Christ was seen to have undergone during his passion Christ instead of one's own comparatively mild sorrows. Tribulations, which can be difficult enough to endure, are to be compared to the sufferings of Christ, who were, of course, infinitely worse than any human would ever experience. The reader is urged to commit herself "to God in every tribulation," and this also includes the form of 'inner' tribulation that in Middle High German is called *Herzenleide*, "suffering of the Heart."

An important lesson for the beginner who wants to aspire is to learn to suffer without this developing into despair, an *inordinate* emotion: "Firstly, you should learn never to despair in any adversity, but to put all your hope in God and seek refuge in prayer in every tribulation; and never forsake the way of justice because of the savagery of any persecution."²⁷³

Alongside the principal interpretation of *tribulatio* as adversities presented by one's surroundings, which is to be met by the patience of the 'warrior of Christ', there is also an understanding of *tribulatio* in the sense of inability of devotion (*duritia*) and in the sense of a 'suffering of the heart'. These forms of tribulation, which are much more focused on the inner life of the individual, imply a self-image that is intensely focused on sin, guilt and weakness. This is another key characteristic, not only of the *Horologium*, but much of the theology and piety in this period as a whole. Suso's dialogue presents reflection on feelings of weakness of devotion and means of encountering such problems, which are part of what seems to have been a massive *guilt culture* and a religiosity that was pervaded by anxiety. Suso's *tribulatio* teaching can be seen as a response to such sentiments. The concept is a means of interpreting feelings of personal guilt, insufficiency and uncertainty within a framework of divine election, and it is a way of eliciting God's powerful grace. *Tribulatio* as a way to intimacy with God is best seen when we consider the relationship between *tribulatio/adversitas* and the primary point of divine-human mediation in medieval religiosity: the passion of Christ.

²⁷³ *Watch* 113; *Hor.* 415.21-26.

II. *Tribulatio* and the Passion of Christ

In the following, we shall consider the *tribulatio* teaching in light of Suso's profoundly Christ-centered theology. Tribulation, we shall see, is understood by Suso as *imitation* of Christ and his passion, and this entails a particular and selective interpretation and appropriation of the passion event.

The close relationship of the ideal of *leiden* or *tribulatio* and the passion of Christ in Suso's works has been commented on by several scholars.²⁷⁴ The common interpretation is that Suso, with his ideal of 'suffering', develops his own particular Christ-centered mysticism of *Gelassenheit*. According to some scholars, Suso thus develops further an 'eckhartian' mysticism.²⁷⁵

We are interested here in the idea of *tribulatio* as a "sum of devotion," a device for shaping piety and concentrating devotional efforts in a way that is directly beneficial for the salvation of the individual.²⁷⁶ This does not rule out a mystical understanding of identification with Christ. However, we shall see in the following sections that intimacy with Christ and the ideal of patience in adversity is, above all, an eschatological teaching that is distanced from mysticism in the eckhartian sense.

Tribulatio in the *Horologium* is primarily a way of articulating Christian life on the path to salvation. This path, in Suso's thought, as in medieval theology and piety in general, goes via the suffering, human Christ. In chapter three of the *Horologium*, Christ himself narrates from his passion:

It would be easier to bring back the day that is gone, to make every flower that has withered since the beginning of the world to bloom again, to store up once more every raindrop that ever fell, than to measure or to estimate the incomprehensible boundlessness of my love; and so it was that my fair body was given over to unnumbered sufferings, for it to bear as certain tokens of my love, so that upon all my

²⁷⁴ See Ulrich (1994); McGinn (2005a), p. 203; 213-17; Ruh (1996), pp. 439-40; Angenendt (2005).

²⁷⁵ See especially Ulrich, (1995), p. 138, who concludes that Suso's concept of *Leiden* is "der wahre Weg zu Gelassenheit, zur Gottessohnschaft im Echartischen Sinne."

²⁷⁶ See Hamm (1999), see n above.

crucified body there was not found room even to dot an “i,” there was nowhere that the marks of sorrow and love did not shine out.²⁷⁷

The passage encapsulates not only Suso’s bombastic style, but also a common tendency in edifying texts, passion treatises and iconography throughout the later Middle Ages, as the ‘christocentric turn’ in the high Middle Ages western religiosity became increasingly occupied with the human, suffering Christ.²⁷⁸ The passion of Christ was seen as an immense act of divine love towards humans, a love that, in this passage, is “shining out” via the unnumbered wounds, for all to see and absorb.²⁷⁹ The wounds and the blood²⁸⁰ of Christ during the passion received special attention in devotional art and writing of the late medieval period as they symbolized the passion and were even seen to mediate the saving grace that the work of Christ entailed. The later Middle Ages is a very creative period, and we may speak of a cultural “boom” in terms of literary production and consummation, large scale participation in religious life, and new ways of engaging in the *do ut des* contract with God: humans responding to the passion and in turn experiencing his saving grace.²⁸¹ In this new variety of devotional ‘media’, exterior channels of grace (sacraments, images, relics) and inner ‘devices’ for acquiring virtue

²⁷⁷ *Watch* 88; *Hor.* 394.15-22 *Facilius dies iam praeterita reiterabitur, flores ab initio mundi arefacti revirescent, pluviarum guttae innumerabiles recolligentur, quam mensurari aut aestimari possit caritatis et dilectionis meae immensitas incomprehensibilis; unde et corpus meum formosum doloribus innumeris tamquam quibusdam amoris signaculis tam multipliciter consignatum fuit, quod non inveniebatur nec spatium unius puncti in meo corpore crucifixo, quod non dolore et amore singulari reluceret.*

²⁷⁸ For the development of medieval passion piety and the influence of Bernard in this development, see Köpf (1993).

²⁷⁹ The profound influence of Bonaventure on Suso, which is commented on by Kurt Ruh (1996), pp. 455-60, may be observed here; the centrality of the idea of God’s *excessus caritatis* which is encountered in the Passion and in the Sacraments is a central point for Bonaventure. Suso here speaks of *caritatis et dilectionis ... immensitas*, which is moreover *incomprehensibilis*, another emphasis also seen in Bonaventure. See Schlosser (2002), pp. 125-6.

²⁸⁰ See Caroline Bynum (2007) for the significance of blood in late medieval religious culture.

²⁸¹ Hamm (2009), pp. 21-2; 27; 44-8.

(prayer, contemplation, or mystical experiences),²⁸² the human, suffering Christ is the central point of reference and divine *presence*.²⁸³

Passion Narratives in the *Horologium*

The two main passion accounts in the *Horologium* are found in chapters three and fifteen. On both occasions, Christ himself is the narrator of the passion event, which is an effective way of meeting the requirements of piety in this period: the interest to know more about the passion and its details, so as to visualize this event and thus be able to respond with compassion. In part, these passion accounts in the *Horologium* resemble the many passion treatises and various “Lives of Christ.”²⁸⁴ A characteristic feature in this passion literature is an effort to gather and convey information about the passion beyond that which was found in the Gospels. These texts are famous for their astonishingly detailed accounts of

²⁸² Prayer books/images and the ‘inner’ practice of prayer, is an example of the combination of interior and exterior medialization and a reminder that this division should not be maintained too firmly, see Angenendt et al. (1995).

²⁸³ See Hamm (2010b), p. 465: “Die Passion wird insofern zum zentralen, omnipräsenten und unendlich variationsreichen Inhalt aller Gnadennähe im Spätmittelalter. Sie steht im Mittelpunkt einer neuen Kultur der emotionalen Nähe, einer neuen Gefühlskultur der Liebe, der erlösenden Liebe Gottes und der antwortenden Liebe des Menschen.”

²⁸⁴ See Ruh (1950); more recent studies are Bestul (1996), Seegets (1998), and Kemper (2006). The best known of these passion treatises are perhaps the pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditationes Vitae Christi* from around 1300 and Ludolph of Saxony’s *Vita Christi* (c. 1370), however, there are numerous other works of this kind, both in Latin and in the vernacular languages, especially German. The prototype of passion treatises is the *Extendit manum*-treatise by Heinrich of St. Gallen. Eckbert of Schönau, the brother of the well-known mystic Elisabeth, and his *Stimulus Amoris* was also highly influential, as Bestul shows (1996), pp. 40-2.

Important foundations for this type of literary production—and for the devotional attitudes this literature strove to stimulate—were laid down in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and particularly by Anselm’s theological orientation toward the human Christ, although he did not produce texts on the passion himself. Bernard’s devotion to the deep wound of Christ, as expressed in his sermons on the *Song of Songs* (no. 43), is well known. With John of Fécamp, the tendency of elaborating the passion event in an even more detailed manner sets a standard for later treatises in their effort to evoke emotional engagement. See Bestul (1996), pp. 36-40. Franciscan contributions, especially Bonaventure with his *Lignum vitae*, had a substantial impact on later medieval piety their concentration on the affective response of the individual to Christ’s suffering humanity. Such passion narratives and treatises became incredibly popular in the later Middle Ages and were among the first works to be printed.

Christ's passion and death.²⁸⁵ We see this tendency of focusing on details of the passion also in Suso's *Horologium*. In chapter three, for instance, we find the typical detailed description of the molestation of Christ's body before and during the crucifixion.²⁸⁶ The immensity of Christ's passion is illustrated with an emphasis on the tenderness of his body, which increased his capacity for suffering.²⁸⁷ Chapter 16, with the disciple's "interview" with Virgin Mary, where she provides her own "eye-witness" account of the passion, is adopted more or less directly from an earlier source, the so-called '*Quis dabit* treatise', only slightly modified to fit the dialogue of the *Horologium*.²⁸⁸ In terms of elaborating the passion event, Suso is in line with this contemporary trend, although his accounts must be said to be moderate in comparison to many of these mentioned treatises.²⁸⁹ In comparison with this tradition of detailed passion elaboration, we may also observe that Suso adheres to it in many respects, but he never subscribes to the tendency in much of this literature to quantify and calculate the passion. This is another striking feature of passion literature, which is in line with the mentioned tendency of a "quantified piety", which has been studied by Arnold Angenendt and others: the later medieval period seems to have been nearly obsessed with numeration and quantification of pious works and objects of veneration.²⁹⁰ Treatises on the passion could report the exact number of wounds on Christ's body, the number of blows applied to it by the torturers, the precise measurements of the cross or the tomb. The absence of number specifications in Suso's passion accounts is worth noting. It is in line

²⁸⁵ These passion elaborations, some of which Bestul describes as "bordering upon obsession," were justified by using Old Testament texts, which were seen not just as prefigurations, but as concrete descriptions of details related to the passion, such as the size of the Cross, the names of the thieves, and the stretching and disfiguration of Christ's body. Bestul shows that the Easter liturgy and especially Psalm 21 and Isaiah texts used in this liturgy, provided 'information' about the passion; the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, as well as the commentaries of the Latin Fathers, made available on a wide scale through the *Glossa ordinaria*, and Peter Comestor's *Historia scholastica*, were important sources for these elaborations. See Bestul (1996), pp. 27-31.

²⁸⁶ *Watch* 86-6; 88; *Hor.* 392; 394.24-31; Several treatises also emphasize that the Cross was not fit for Christ's body, and so it had to be stretched to fit the nails. See Bestul (1999), e.g. pp. 44; 65-6.

²⁸⁷ *Watch* 86; *Hor.* 392.13 (*corpus delicatum*).

²⁸⁸ For an edition and translation of this treatise, see Bestul (1996).

²⁸⁹ See Haas (1993).

²⁹⁰ See Angenendt et. al. (1995); see above, pp. 61-63. See also below pp. 99-102nn.

with his rejection of a piety based on calculation of outer works and of repeated exercises out of habit and his relentless emphasis on inner fervor and “renewal of love.”

To give a worthy and suitable *response* to this act of divine love is a basic claim of late medieval piety.²⁹¹ The passion treatises generally accommodate response by stimulating *compassio*. What is the role of compassion in the *Horologium*? It has commonly been regarded in research on Suso, that his idea of *leiden* should be seen as *com-passion*, and not *compassio*. Kurt Ruh asserted that Suso in the *Bdew* deviates from the passion treaties with his concept of *imitation* of Christ and that he rejects compassion in favor of *imitation*.²⁹² Whereas the broad tradition of late medieval passion narratives can be said to accommodate a “composition of place,”²⁹³ by using a rhetoric which seeks to incite compassion and emotional engagement by means of elaboration, the *Horologium* goes beyond this and seeks *conformitas* with the suffering Christ through the idea of *adversitas* or *tribulatio*.²⁹⁴ However, upon closer scrutiny of the *Horologium*, this view can be nuanced. We shall consider a passage where the disciple, confronted with the passion account of Christ, is anxious to know how he can give a proper response to the passion:

Disciple: (...) O, that I might shed all the tears that every eye has ever wept, that I might utter the mourning words that every tongue has spoken, that I might be granted to offer some better exchange for your Passion!

Wisdom: No one offers me a better exchange for my Passion than he who follows after it, not only with his words but also with his deeds, who always “bears in his body the marks,” that is the works of the cross, humbly following along in my footsteps, so that he treads worldly joys underfoot and has no fear of ill fortune, who ever presses on, with a burning desire, up towards the peak of spiritual perfection. I tell you that floods of tears as plentiful as the rivers in a torrent would not be so acceptable to me as are the tears of a loving heart, moved by a feeling of compassion, for they are dear and welcome to God.²⁹⁵

²⁹¹ See Angenendt (2004), p. 98; Hamm (2009).

²⁹² Ruh (1996), pp. 439–40.

²⁹³ Bestul (1996).

²⁹⁴ Ruh (1996), p. 440.

²⁹⁵ *Watch* 86.7; *Hor.* 393.6–17 *O si possem omnium oculorum uberes lacrimas effundere omnique linguarum motivas et flebiles voces habere, ut passioni tuae tanto efficiacius daretur rependere vices.*

The disciple articulates a feeling of insufficiency and the problems related to a worthy response (*rependere vices*) to God's act of love.²⁹⁶ He thinks that the immensity of the passion requires an immense response, in the form of excessive compassion.²⁹⁷ With the disciple in the role of a religious beginner, Suso presents this as a common misunderstanding, which needs to be corrected.

What makes humans acceptable to God? How can humans repay this immense sacrifice on their behalf? We see that Christ admonishes to follow his passion, a main point that we shall return to. However, we also observe that in light of Ruh's assertion of a rejection of *compassio* in favor of *imitatio*, this passage is ambiguous. Ruh's argument is based on the passage in *Bdew* that corresponds to this extract from the *Horologium*.²⁹⁸ Importantly, the last sentence in the quoted passage is not found in the 'original' *Bdew* but was added when Suso developed the *Horologium*. What we see in this 'modified' Latin version is not a rejection of *compassio*, but a correction of a "wrongheaded" form of compassion, which emphasizes the outer dimension (the amount of tears) instead of the *inner intention*. It may also be that Suso here alludes to tears of pain from self-mortification.²⁹⁹ We have seen above that the *Horologium* takes a decisive stand against such practices.³⁰⁰ Similarly, when Christ, as seen above, speaks of his passion and his many wounds as signs of God's bottomless love, this love is not

SAPIENTIA: Nemo melius passioni meae rependit vices, quam qui non verbis solum sed et factis ipsam prosequitur, qui 'stigmata', id est crucis opera iugiter 'in suo portat corpore,' [Gal 6.17] se meis humiliter conformando vestigiis, prospera videlicet calcans, adversa non formidans; qui ardent semper desiderio ad culmen tendit spiritualis perfectionis. Dico tibi quod nec tot lacrimarum imbres, quot aquarum sunt gurgites, coram me essent tam acceptabiles, quamvis etiam piae lacrimae ex affectu compassionis procedentes, amabiles et gratae coram Deo existant

²⁹⁶ *Acceptabilis, accepior, amabilis* is used in similar passages that discuss the effort of responding to God.

²⁹⁷ In the Sister-Books, for instance, the ideal of compassion is expressed through portrayals of excessive crying and shedding of tears can frequently be seen. See, for instance the "Töss Sister-Book," ed. Vetter, p. 29; 36.

²⁹⁸ See Ruh (1996), p. 39; *Bdew* 205.30-206.3; *Exemplar* 215.

²⁹⁹ A very similar antithesis is seen in the treatise *Novem puncta*, see quotation and comments in Angenendt et al. (1995), p. 60.

³⁰⁰ The moralizing tendency in critical literature from this period was directed against compassion piety exteriorized in combination with bodily asceticism or against the 'quantified piety' of outer works related to indulgences. See Angenendt et al. (1995), pp. 40-71, here esp. 60-61; for prayer books and the widespread tendency of quantified the piety of indulgences, see the classic study of Nikolaus Paulus (1922/23/2000). See more on Suso's indulgence teaching below.

only incomprehensible, but also impossible “to measure or to estimate.”³⁰¹ Thus, a response that corresponds quantitatively is impossible. There is a gap of infinitude, which must be overcome in another way than through outer works of piety.

On various occasions in the *Horologium*, Suso encourages compassion as response to the passion. A similar attitude is seen in chapter fourteen: “The recollection of my Passion should be (...) done with mature and careful and heartfelt recollection, and with a certain mournful compassion.”³⁰² This should be seen in light of the wide approach in *Horologium* which seeks to integrate and adapt forms of inner devotion that are held as *amabiles et gratae coram Deo*, “dear and welcome to God.”

These additions to the *Horologium* suggest Suso’s effort of integrating various forms of devotion and levels of advancement; and to provide a uniting effort, a concentration of devotional effort that he sees as beneficial for everyone according to their own abilities. The work accommodates compassion *to a certain extent*; as we see from eternal Wisdom’s comment above, the primary form of response is to *follow* the passion of Christ (*Nemo melius passioni meae rependit vices, quam ... ipsam prosequitur*).³⁰³

Tribulation and the Passion of Christ

We shall now return to our main theme: *tribulatio* as interpretation and imitation of the passion of Christ. The encouragement to follow Christ in his passion is seen on numerous occasions in the *Horologium*. In chapter 15, the disciple expresses that he wishes to have *been there* at Christ’s side, and even to have died along with him—another example of how the protagonist fails to understand the idea of satisfaction and thinks that it is impossible to truly respond to God. In reply to this, we find the claim which occurs time and again in medieval religiosity:

³⁰¹ See above, pp. 61–63nn.

³⁰² *Watch* 203; *Hor.* 494.28–495.2 *Memoria passionis meae debet fieri ... dum matura et morosa ac praecordiali rememorazione et flebili quadam compassione.*

³⁰³ Thus, although the *Horologium* cannot be said to correspond accurately to Ruh’s interpretation of the *Bdew* with regard to compassion, both works share the general emphasis on *imitatio Christi*.

“...now the time has come for everyone ’who wishes to come after me to deny himself and take up his cross and follow me’,” (Mt 16.24). Christ/Wisdom continues, in reply to the disciple, “...and let him know for certain that this loving imitation will be as acceptable to me as (...) if (...) he had stood fast by me and died with me as I was dying.”³⁰⁴

The ideal of *imitatio Christi* was interpreted in numerous ways in medieval religiosity; poverty, pilgrimage, crusades, asceticism, flagellation; varying from time to time and in various settings: the solitude of the reformed orders of the twelfth century; the wandering mendicant preachers, the ideal of poverty and so on, in numerous variations around the theme of following Christ (more or less) literally.³⁰⁵ Especially in chapters three and fifteen it is evident that Suso’s *imitatio* ideal entails a specific and selective interpretation of the passion. The actual scenes of the passion are followed by “mirror passages,” where the author points to its practical appliance through “patience in adversity.” Suso, in line with the trends of popular devotional literature in his time, provides many details from the physical suffering of Christ. However, only specific aspects of Christ’s passion are relevant to the devotional “program” of imitation which Suso wants to accommodate. It is primarily in combination with Christ’s patience and humility through his own *tribulatio* or *adversitas* that Suso uses terms like *conformare*, *imitator* or *configuratio*.³⁰⁶ In a “compendium” in chapter 15, Suso sums up the essential elements of this Christ oriented devotion: turning away from the world and forsaking “worldly profits and consolations,” leaving ones friends for the love of the Savior, and being ready to “do nothing to those who attack or accuse and show hostility to you,” but reacting to this “patiently and with great sweetness of heart.”³⁰⁷ “Whoever will do these things,” Eternal Wisdom continues, “will be a true imitator of Jesus Christ (*Verus Iesu Christi imitator existit*).”

³⁰⁴ *Watch* 210; *Hor.* 501.3-6 *et sciat pro certo hanc imitationem devotam tam acceptabilem mihi fore, quantum fuisset pro tunc si mecum perstisset, et mortuus pariter cum moriente fuisset.*

³⁰⁵ See above all Giles Constable’s chapter “The Ideal of the Imitation of Christ,” in Constable (1995), pp. 143-248.

³⁰⁶ *Watch* 207; *Hor.* 498.23-25, *configuratio* is an adoption from Thomas and from Phil. 3.19. See Künzle (1977), p 498.

³⁰⁷ *Watch* 210-11; *Hor.* 501.

As you conquer the habits that have grown old in you, you will be taken captive and, in a manner, bound; for you will endure from my enemies secret calumnies and open insults and shames, but you will always bear my Passion too in you breast (...) You will suffer many reproaches and unjust judgments from many, you will have detraction from the envious, and your head will be crowned as if with thorns when your spiritual endeavors are frustrated by the goading of envy.³⁰⁸

The ideal of conformity is formulated by Suso as to “suffer in spirit” the hardships that Christ “bore to the end.” This may entail asceticism,³⁰⁹ but most importantly, “the onslaughts of the many tribulations that dispose you to my love” have a direct parallel to the adversities we have looked into: reproaches and attacks from impious surroundings, or in the sense of “Suffering of the heart,” as seen above. This latter form of *tribulatio* corresponds to the immense sorrow and sadness that Christ himself was thought to have experienced during the passion. Among the many aspects of the passion that Christ narrates, some of which are bloody and extreme, in line with the tradition of passion narratives, it is first and foremost the *inner attitude* of Christ in relation to his surroundings which are to be imitated and appropriated.³¹⁰

We shall add another example to illustrate Suso’s emphasis. Several of the best-known passion narratives use the motive of the *harp* in order to elaborate how Christ’s body was stretched on the cross like the strings of the instrument. In the *Horologium*, we also find the use of the harp in relation to suffering, but here, characteristically, the harp means the devotee who is experiencing adversities, who is “stretched” and thus gives out a heavenly melody which is pleasing to God’s ear. Suso uses this metaphor of the harp in the sense of Gregory, and not like the passion treatises.³¹¹ By doing this, he shifts the focus toward personal appropriation and actualization of the passion in the sense of *adversitas* instead of emotional embedding by means of imaginative visual reconstruction. *Tribulatio*

³⁰⁸ *Watch* 82-3; *Hor.* 392

³⁰⁹ See *Watch* 87 (“mortify the desires of your flesh”); *Hor.* 293.24-26.

³¹⁰ It is interesting to notice that this passage is a more or less a direct translation from the *Bdew* version, but that the following sentence has been left out in the *Horologium*: “Your untried body will be scourged by a harsh and severe way of life,” *Exemplar* 215; *Bdew* 205.22-23 *Din ungeübter lip wirt gezeiselt mit dem herten strengen lebenne*.

³¹¹ This is from Gregory’s *Moralia in Iob*. See Kunzle (1977), p. 488. For more about the harp as a motive in passion treatises, see Kemper (2006), p. 275.

bridges the gap of space and time between the historical life and death of Christ and everyday devotional life.

In the third chapter of the *Horologium*, Suso's disciple is confronted with Christ's account of the passion event and the way of tribulation as *imitatio*. The disciple raises the famous question of satisfaction (cf. Anselm and his *Cur deus homo*):³¹² Why did God have to choose this path of suffering and misery to redeem humans?

O, if it were permitted to wretched men to say this to you: Why did you do so? Could you not in your eternal wisdom have found another way both to save us miserable ones and to show your love to us and still to have spared such sorrows for yourself, such compassion for us?³¹³

In Eternal Wisdom's response to this question, we find first the standard answers by Augustine and Thomas: That the intellect cannot grasp the divine substance,³¹⁴ and thus, Suso adds, we cannot "scrutinize the depths of divine judgment." Furthermore, Eternal Wisdom refers to God's omnipotence and asserts that it could well have been different, but that the passion and death of Christ was the *most appropriate way* (*nullus congruentior modus erat*).³¹⁵ On his own account, Suso adds that man who "lost his joys through ill-regulated affections" regains his loss "through worldly tribulations," and thus he implies the way of following Christ through tribulation.

This formulation of the problem of satisfaction (*quare sic fecisti?*), appears not simply as a reaction to the passion, but to the way of tribulation and adversity as the way of the devotees to appropriate the passion. The preceding discussion in the dialogue is about the appropriation of the passion to everyday life through

³¹² This and the following are based on Ruh's comments on the passages in the *Bdew*, but these are adopted without any significant changes to the *Horologium*. See Ruh (1996), p. 439-40.

³¹³ *Watch* 83; *Hor.* 389.27-390.3 *O si liceret dicere miseris ad te: Quare sic fecisti? Numquid in tua aeterna sapientia non potuisti invenire alium modum, per quem et miseros salvares et tuam nobis dilectionem ostenderes, ut sic et teipsum a tantis doloribus, nosque a compassionibus tantis suportasses?*

³¹⁴ A wording very close to Thomas' *Summa contra gentiles*. See Künzle (1977), p. 390.

³¹⁵ *Hor.* 390.15-16. The point is formulated by Augustine in *De trinitate* XIII (PL 42 1024) and cited by Aquinas in *STh* III q. 1 a. 2 c. See Künzle's notes (1977), p. 390; see also Bynum (2007), pp. 199-200.

patience in adversity, which we have seen addressed by the voice of Christ. This provokes the disciple to ask this theological question of satisfaction. Suso's ideal passion piety is a *completion* of the passion event. The meaning of the passion is a path of *conformitas* enacted by its followers. Reflection and appropriation, in other words theology and piety, are most closely interwoven. Theological reflection is directly applied to a concrete shaping of Christian life.³¹⁶ Tribulation, "the first pages for those reading you [Christ]" and "one thing necessary for salvation,"³¹⁷ is an actualization in everyday life of the passion of Christ, "as it were "a book of life," (Apoc 3.5) in which all things necessary for salvation are found".³¹⁸

The Presence of Christ: Tribulatio and Mysticism

"Whoever will do these things," Wisdom asserts with reference to the ideal of following Christ through endurance in adversity, "will be a true imitator of Jesus Christ, who will bestow on him an abundance and delights of his presence."³¹⁹ As discussed above, tribulation and "spiritual consolations" and experiences of divine sweetness are related; in a sequential structure of interchange, hardships are followed by alleviation and spiritual joy. Such moments of joy are 'near mystical' experiences; they express an inner presence of grace, but they are not *unitive* experiences in a strict sense.³²⁰ Moreover, it seems that it is not states of *tribulatio* as such but states associated to it by way of a 'spiritual oscillation' that are spoken of as "consolation." In the discussions of adversity as conformity with the suffering Christ, however, another form of divine presence is suggested by Suso. This presence is not only described in terms of grace or delight; it is the presence of the suffering Christ himself.

Whoever may have conquered himself in this injurious conflict, for the glory and the imitation of the Crucified One, should know that every time that he has done

³¹⁶ See Hamm (1999), p. 16.

³¹⁷ See above, p. 35n; 40n; 68n.

³¹⁸ *Watch* 202; *Hor.* 494.13-14.

³¹⁹ *Watch* 212; *Hor.* 502.23 *Quicumque haec fecerit, verus Iesu Christi imitator existit, et delicias ei copiosas apud se ministrabit.*

³²⁰ See Hamm (2010a), p. 206; see above, pp. 41-6.

this, he has caused the death of the Lord to be enacted again as though it were new, and that he will carry my crucified image in him.³²¹

Volker Leppin has focused attention on what he calls a “piety of representation” in the late Middle Ages.³²² This is a useful term for interpreting the ideal of following Christ and making Christ *present* to the world through the follower. Unlike a modern conception of imitation, which emphasizes the *difference* between the imitator and the one imitated, Leppin notes that in medieval understanding of *imitatio*, the one that is imitated is conceived as being *actually* present in the imitator. Leppin’s example is Francis of Assisi and the legendary tradition of the La Verna stigmatization, which stresses that in Francis Christ was actually present. The holy person becomes the *place* for divine presence.³²³ Leppin finds that this logic of representation is fundamental in medieval spirituality, where the holy and especially Christ himself penetrates the world in an unending number of variations—from saint’s relics to the presence in the Eucharist. Holiness and its presence permeates medieval religious world, and, given a certain minimum level of susceptibility this presence could be experienced and understood in various ways and with different levels of intensity.

A piety of representation, Leppin adds, may or may not be distinctly mystical in its conceptions of identification with Christ.³²⁴ Suso admonishes inner identification, “as far as you are able,” with Christ through *conformatio*.³²⁵ Patient endurance in identification with Christ is seen, as in the passage above, to effectuate a *presence* of Christ in the follower. Is this not a mystical teaching?

A contemporary of Suso who outlines a distinct ‘mysticism of suffering’ is Johannes Tauler. Tauler quotes Bernard of Clairvaux and his contrast of useful

³²¹ *Watch* 210; *Hor.* 501.17 *quicumque in hac contrarietate laesiva ad gloriam et imitationem crucifixi se ipsum superaverit, scire debet quotienscumque hoc fecerit, quod mortem domini quasi recenter reviviscere facit, et imaginem crucifixi in se portabit.*

³²² Leppin (2007a).

³²³ Leppin’s contribution is one in a long line of recent publications that discuss medieval religiosity and its ‘Culture of Presence’. See, e.g., Hasebrink (2007), Aris (2007), and other contributions in Kiening (ed.) (2007). See also Hamm (2007a); (2009).

³²⁴ Leppin (2007a).

³²⁵ Kurt Ruh (ibid.) saw in the *Bdew* an “Ablehnung” of *compassio* in favor of imitation. See *Bdew* 208.24-8. The *Horologium*, on the other hand, expands the passages on compassion and adds a remark that emphasizes the *quality* of compassion.

inner suffering in patience to countless and great ‘outer’ works of piety; this is not unique and could be asserted by many a late medieval preacher.³²⁶ Suffering is held by Tauler as “immensely useful, fruitful, valuable,”³²⁷ much in the same way as in Suso does in the *Horologium*, and it is closely related to Christ’s suffering, which is the “loving image” or model to follow;³²⁸ and *Leiden* is a hallmark of the elect friend of God also in Tauler.³²⁹ Unlike the *tribulatio* teaching in *Horologium*, however, Tauler with his conception of *leiden* proceeds in a distinctly graduated process of inner detachment that culminates in a full inner identification with God in the soul’s ground. Tauler’s conception of *leiden* lies very close to an eckhartian sense of *Durchbruch*, “breakthrough” of the soul into God. In his discussions of *Leiden*, John Tauler constantly refers to the mystical encounter, union, with the godhead in the ground (*grunt*) of the Soul.³³⁰ In the *Horologium*, there is no equivalent to this metaphor of the ground, which is so intensely fixated upon in Tauler’s sermons.³³¹

In the *Horologium*, we do not find that the idea of suffering, *tribulatio*, is expressed as a ‘quest within’, as seen in the sermons of Tauler, or for that matter

³²⁶ See also Eckhart’s similar attitude, commented on by Kurt Ruh (1989), pp. 35-36, who uses the term “Ethik des Seins”; see also Hasebrink (2005) 128-29.

³²⁷ Tauler, *Predigten*, ed. Hofmann, p. 552: *unermesslich nützlich, fruchtbar und wertvoll*.

³²⁸ Through suffering, Tauler states, it is possible to merit participation in the suffering of our Lord. Ed Hoffmann, p. 552: *Es ist dem Menschen durchaus möglich, in jeglichem Leiden sich eine ganze Teilhabe am Leiden unsres Herrn zu verdienen*.

³²⁹ Just as the disciples of Christ were despised by the learned and the Pharisees, so the Friends of God are despised by the clerical and academic elites, See Sermon 9, *Predigten* ed. Hofmann, p. 60-61; ed Vetter, p. 41; Thus also in Tauler, the *electi* are sharply distinguished by their uncompromising religious ways, which are “hidden.” “Weil sie Gott in seinem verborgenen Wege folgen müssen,” ed. Hofmann, p. 61; ed. Vetter 41.25-30.

³³⁰ Tauler describes a gradualized process of *leiden*. The first phases are similar to Suso’s *tribulatio* teaching, whereas the further process describes inward *ker* and the ultimate stage of *wesulich ker*, see ed. Vetter, p. 169.20-25: *do wirt der geist also wukkenklichen in gezogen, und wirt alzemole mit der gotheit durchflossen und über gegossen und in in gezogen, das er in Gottes einikeit verlüret alle manigvaltikeit*.) See Tauler’s Sermon 27 (ed. Vetter) p. 146.21-23, and sermon 40 (ed. Vetter). See McGinn (2005a), pp. 254-64; See also Pleuser (1967), and Hamm (2010a), p. 243.

³³¹ McGinn, (2005a), p. 254, notes that this “master metaphor” of the ground of the soul, and its derivatives, occur more than 400 times in Tauler’s sermons. McGinn also mentions Suso as one who uses this term often, but that cannot be said of the *Horologium*; it is a distinctly ‘mystical’ term.

as in the works of Eckhart.³³² A thinking on suffering as a mystical process toward *unio* is indeed found in other works by Suso. His *Vita* has often been interpreted, and rightly so, as a work that portrays a spiritual maturation process from outer suffering toward inner ‘breakthrough’, where *leiden* is another way of speaking of the detachment (*gelassenheit*) of the soul.³³³ As mentioned already, the ideal of *leiden* as it appears in the *Bdew*, the forerunner of the *Horologium*, has been interpreted along these lines.³³⁴

Traces of the mystical idea of *Gelassenheit* can be observed also in the *Horologium*: To endure tribulations is expressed by Suso (I, 13) as self-abandonment (*te ipsum deserere*).³³⁵ We see also that a contrasting use of *voluntas*, “will,” is important when the ‘adversity thinking’ is formulated: instead of pursuing their own free will, which is the hallmark of the decadent religious, the *electi* appropriate the will of God by sustaining the tribulations sanctioned by Him.³³⁶ This might be seen as similar to a ‘mysticism of will’.³³⁷ In chapter fifteen, Eternal Wisdom speaks of a union with God’s will, which sounds mystical in tone: “The greater the anguish of your outward self and the dereliction of your inward self, if this be united to God’s will, the more you will be like to the Crucified One and accepted by that Father who is to be loved in all things.”³³⁸ He can be said to draw on a

³³² See McGinn (2005a), on Eckhart, who states that “My suffering is in God and my suffering is God”; See Eckhart, *Werke*, Sermons 1, 49, 86; *RdU* 16-18. McGinn (2005a), pp. 159-60, continues: “What is essential is to appropriate the inner attitude that Jesus revealed in his suffering and death by becoming totally fixed on God, no matter what the external situations in which we find ourselves. Suffering (...) is not a way to God, but is actually identical with the goal.”

³³³ McGinn, (2005a), p. 203, comments on Suso’s *Vita* and the shift from extreme asceticism and “the necessity of a transition from the exterior literal imitation of the passion to an interior spiritual appropriation that allows the breakthrough to union in the divine ground.”

³³⁴ Ulrich (1994), pp. 133-38. McGinn (2005a), Haas (1998).

³³⁵ *Watch* 215 “...The greater the anguish of your outward self and the dereliction of your inward self, if this be united to God’s will, the more you will be like to the Crucified One and accepted by that Father who is to be loved in all things”: *Hor.* 505.16-20 *Tunc absque dubio, quanto fuerit maior hominis exterioris pressura et desertio hominis interioris cum voluntate Dei unita, tanto similior eris cricifixo et acceptior Patri peramando.*

³³⁶ *Watch* 194-95 *Hor.* 487.16-17 *totum te Deo in omni tribulatione committere, eiusque voluntati parere patienter*

³³⁷ See Leppin’s definition of mysticism that includes “Wesens-“ and “Willenseinigung” (2001).

³³⁸ *Watch* 215; *Hor.* 505.16-20 *Tunc absque dubio, quanto fuerit maior hominis exterioris pressura et desertio hominis interioris cum voluntate Dei unita, tanto similior eris cricifixo et acceptior Patri peramando.*

mystical jargon of inner proximity to God—but without inserting a genuinely mystical theology as an alternative. The term *parere* used here can also mean simply to “obey” God’s will, in a standard formulation of renunciation of the world by which the truly devout are contrasted to the man of a worldly heart who “does as he pleases or wants.”³³⁹ The claim to abandonment (*deserere*) in tribulation is a mystically inspired but simplified and thus ‘transformed’ teaching. It encourages moral refinement and “a good life,” and it is a fundamentally *accessible* understanding in that it does not presuppose any particular disposition for mystical speculation in its audience.

There is an important *ethical* dimension to this idea about divine ‘presence in adversity’. Throughout, the emphasis lies on morality and moral distinction more than inner detachment in a mystical sense. The elect in the vision we discussed above, hindered by the “sea monsters” in reaching out to Christ, are said to “give out a sweet fragrance of virtue in their bearing of adversities.” It is precisely in the ‘moral clash’ with one’s impious surroundings that an inner refinement occurs. Adversity, sustained patiently, is a device of distinction that generates an inner ‘moral sensibility’, which is a driving force in Suso’s admonishments.³⁴⁰ From a point of view of moral criticism, Suso conveys a teaching that sometimes reveals the spirit of Eckhart, but the eckhartian ideal of detachment is ‘transformed’ into a non-speculative teaching on tribulation and endurance as means of gaining virtue in a world that abounds in moral depravity. Suso articulates a conception of Christ’s presence in the heart using the terms “image and likeness”; Jesus Christ bestows on the imitator “an abundance and delights of his presence.” Seen isolated, this looks similar to the ‘visitations’ or ‘consolations’ of divine presence that were discussed above. However, apart from such formulations, the appropriation of Christ’s patient suffering is not expressed primarily in terms of an exclusive encounter between the soul and God. The emphasis is not so much on a personal experience of immediacy in suffering: rather, it is asserted that this type of participatory suffering brings about a presence that, like the wounds of

³³⁹ *Watch* 102; *Hor* 406.

³⁴⁰ See Schmidtke (1982), cited in Angenendt (1995), n. 361.

Christ, “shines out” and back toward one’s adversaries; the resources that tribulations bring about are to the benefit not only of the individual, but also of the neighbor (*proximum*). As Christ ‘shines through’ the devotee who is in adversity, this, importantly, has an edifying effect on one’s neighbors:³⁴¹ “your mild kindness may justly bring shame to your adversaries and their pride should be brought low by your humility, then truly will the image and likeness of my death shine out again in you.”³⁴² When Suso mentions the elect in the vision of the city in ruins (I, 5), he portrays them as a small remaining minority amongst a morally depraved population who “in their baring of adversities were as lights shining in this world.” Patience in tribulations causes Christ to be present, indeed in the individual, but this also has effect for one’s neighbor. The role of the neighbor (*proximum*) and the many connections of *aedificatio* and *proximum* in the *Horologium* are worth noticing.³⁴³

What is more, due to the close identification with Christ (*conformitas*), the “true imitator” has access to the “superabundance of grace” that is associated with the passion. With this privilege, the patient sufferer shall also be an *intercessor* on behalf of his adversaries. When the adversaries of this world attack and scorn and accuse you, Wisdom exhorts, “...you must not only endure this patiently and willingly for God, but you must also, out of your superabundance of grace, apply yourself with greater zeal to praying for them to “the Father who is in heaven,” (Mt 5.16) and with devotion you must commend them to me, and show me that they are forgivable.”³⁴⁴ In addition, this suggests that the presence of Christ that is brought about through adversity, is not only a personal affair; with the grace that

³⁴¹ This is in principle a piety of representation similar to the *paupertas* and *caritas* of Elisabeth of Thüringen, Volker Leppin’s (2007a) example.

³⁴² *Watch* 211; *Hor.* 502.12 *Cumque his, qui te impugnant seu criminantur et adversa inferunt, voluntarie cesseris, et eorum, qui te verberis importune invaderunt, iram et impatientiam tam mansuete et cum tanta cordis dulcedine et verborum suavitate ac vultus hilaritate receperis, ut tua dulcis benignitas merito adversariis verecundiam inferre possit, et eorum debeat tumor tua ex humilitate confringi, tunc mortis meae imago et similitudo in te veraciter relucebit.*

³⁴³ See Hamm’s formulation “selbstpastorat der Frommen” as an aspect in late medieval ‘popular’ theology. See the introduction to this study. This is an aspect of Suso’s *Horologium* that deserves more attention, but that is beyond the limits of this study.

³⁴⁴ *Watch* 210; *Hor.* 501.14 *tu autem haec non solum patienter et libenter pro Deo sufferas, verum etiam ex superabundanti ‘Patrem, qui in caelis est,’ serius pro eis exorare studeris, et eos devote apud me excusaveris, ipsos mihi recommendando*

is thus bestowed comes a crucial responsibility for the salvation and spiritual growth (*aedificatio*) of others. As a spirit in closeness with God, the devote sufferer becomes a ‘mediator’ of his grace to the world.³⁴⁵

The idea of a presence of Christ brought about in endurance of sufferings is mystical in the sense of a ‘healing presence’ of the divine in the individual; but it is a form of mysticism that is significantly toned down compared to the ‘canon’ of the Rhineland Mystics, especially as the element of *unio* with God is not emphasized.³⁴⁶ Hence, if we are to follow Peter Ulrich or Bernard McGinn,³⁴⁷ who have found that the teaching on *leiden* in the *Bdew* is essentially an eckhartian teaching on detachment, we can hardly say that Suso in the *Horologium* has gone to great lengths to retain this aspect. Some of the most speculative and ‘eckhartian’ ringing statements in the *Bdew* did not make it into the *Horologium* at all.³⁴⁸ From our perspective, this is an interesting observation that agrees with a key aspect of ‘theology of piety’, namely the tendency in theology to distance itself from the exclusivity of speculative mysticism.³⁴⁹ After all, the vernacular mysticism of the Upper Rhine area was exactly what the label says: a local phenomenon. It occurred at that particular place in that particular time, for many intriguing reasons;³⁵⁰ but it did not last, and it did not, at least not in its pure form, go far beyond the German or Dutch speaking areas. With the *Horologium*, Suso reaches out and beyond a setting of mysticism. To use a heuristic concept of ‘intended audience’, we can say that the intended audience of the *Horologium*, unlike that of, say Tauler’s sermons, would not have been susceptible to such ideas.

³⁴⁵ In this sense, Suso’s idea of tribulatio is not unlike the representation piety of Elisabeth of Thüringen, as Leppin demonstrated. For new perspectives on medialization of grace, see Hamm (2009) and other studies in that volume.

³⁴⁶ See Hamm’s understanding (2010a), p. 206. With a ‘canon’ of mysticism, we include both the sources that exerted influence on the ‘German mystics’ and these mystics’ works themselves; hence, with Hamm, *ibid.* as for Kurt Ruh (1996), such a group of sources includes Pseudo Dionysius Areopagita, Bernard of Clairvaux, Mechthild von Magdeburg, Meister Eckhart, Johannes Tauler, Heinrich Suso, Jan van Ruusbroec, and other works that have been regarded as mystical, not only based on the content of such sources, but also “die Überlieferungszusammenhänge, in denen sie in profilierter Weise rezipiert wurden,” Hamm, *ibid.* See also Leppin (2007c), p. 9.

³⁴⁷ See Ulrich (1994), pp. 133–38; McGinn (2005a), p. 203.

³⁴⁸ See below, p 245.

³⁴⁹ See Mossman’s summary (2010) with references; see introduction above.

³⁵⁰ See above all Grundmann (1961/2002).

We can explain Suso's omission of speculative tenets from a slightly different angle, and thus recall another main tenet within 'theology of piety': We can say that Suso, when he developed the Latin work, did not find such speculative tenets of 'detachment thought' to be necessary or fruitful for the individualized, salvation-oriented spirituality to which he wanted to contribute.

Formulations such as *desertio hominis interioris* and *cum Deo voluntate unita* are perhaps the closest we get in the *Horologium* to the German terms *Ge-lassenheit* or *Abegescheidenheit*, which are well known mystical terms.³⁵¹ This inner dereliction is held as "adversity's central point," (*punctum adversitatis*) and describes the ultimate type of conformity "by which the best tried warriors placed in the vanguard of Christ are most strictly tested." But rather than to call further attention to the soul's union with God, which is the hallmark of a 'genuine' mysticism, Suso is more concerned with the ethical and, importantly, the *eschatological* implications of *tribulatio*.

It was said above that Suso, with his many accounts of spiritual decay, reacts to what he perceived as a moral and religious crisis of eschatological proportions. Let us now follow this theme a bit further and consider the eschatological outlook that accompanies Suso's *tribulatio* teaching.

III. Tribulations and the Last Things

Suso's teaching on the tribulations of the elect is outlined against the worldly surroundings, as we have seen, and makes out a teaching about Christian moral conduct in this life and close, inner identification with Christ. These ideas are also embedded in an 'economy of the afterlife'. In chapter nine, the first of the two 'tribulation chapters', Suso speaks of the reason (*ratio*) of God's afflictions, which is unfathomable by people caught up in worldly pursuits. This encouragement to appropriate a 'perspective of eternity' at the end of in chapter nine forms an introduction to two large-scale visions of the afterlife, the torments of Hell and of the joys of heaven (I, 10-11). As a key element in Suso's 'sapiential theolo-

³⁵¹ See Haas (1995).

gy',³⁵² *tribulatio* cultivates the devotee's understanding and enables him to consider his spiritual journey *sub specie aeternitatis*. In this sense, the teaching on *tribulatio* is an edifying instruction adjusted to a religious outlook that sought out ways and means to lessen punishment in the afterlife.

We have already seen that indulgence thinking plays a role; tribulations are said, quite simply, to lessen purgatory. With the idea of *tribulatio*, Suso conveys a general medieval (monastic) understanding: that suffering in this world reduced punishment in the next. This idea is not only present, but even intensified, we might say, as *tribulatio* and *adversitas* receive such a prominent place in Suso's general teaching on the good life of devotion.

The disciple, in chapter nine, expresses frustration and sorrow on behalf of his neighbors. He complains that they do not realize the benefits of tribulations. They think that because of the "constant tribulations of the just" there is "no salvation" (Ps 3.3.). Hence, they turn away from God and they keep "entangling themselves again in their pernicious ways." *Aedificare proximum*, the edification of one's neighbor, is an important element in Suso's *Horologium*, to which he often encourages his reader. However, this *aedificatio* could apparently be a frustrating affair. The disciple probably reflects basic day-to-day challenges of the missionary activity of mendicant friars, for whom this work is, at least partly, intended.³⁵³ As always, Eternal Wisdom provides consolation and encouragement to the Disciple: People "of little faith or knowledge" cannot comprehend the reason (*ratio*) for God's tribulations, she says; worldly minds cannot see beyond present things and the "vale of misery ... where good things mixed with bad are revolved in an endless whirl."³⁵⁴

For man looks only at present things, but God at what is to come and is everlasting.
But you, who have been brought up differently in our spiritual philosophy, stand up

³⁵² *Watch* 197; *Hor.* 490.10-11 *Ipsa tribuit sapientiam, adducit circumspectionem, et hominem inexpertum exercitationem facit.* Similarly, the treatise *De duodecim utilitatibus* states that tribulations bring about self knowledge, see above. For Suso's 'sapiential' theology, see Ulrich (1993), pp. 124-5 with further references.

³⁵³ See *Hor.* II, 6-8, which suggests instruction of Dominican friars as an important aim of the work. See introduction above, pp. 12-13.

³⁵⁴ *Watch* 155; *Hor.* 453.18-20 *in valle miseriae ... ubi bona permixta malis continua vertigine revolvuntur*

(...), rise out of the ensnaring foulness of temporal delights. Open the eyes of your mind and see what you are, where you are, and where you are going; and then at once you will have the strength to grasp the reason (*rationem*) of all these things. For you are a mirror of the godhead (*speculum divinitatis*), because God can be reflected in you more clearly than in other created things; you are an image of the Trinity (*imago trinitatis*), because his image can shine back in you; you are a pattern of eternity (*exemplar aeternitatis*), because you can rejoice in an inviolable incorruption. And just as I am in my essence infinite, so the desire of your soul is like a boundless abyss, to fill which not all the joys together of the world could suffice, no more than a single drop could fill the vastness of an ocean.³⁵⁵

Despite the gloomy outlook and the strong sense of mass decay and the “insane world” that is seen particularly in the *planctus ecclesiae* chapter, this encouragement to “open the eyes,” and to see oneself as a *speculum divinitatis* expresses a crucial optimism, at least on behalf of the elect. The idea that humans are created in the image of God and thus can “return to similitude” by way of co-suffering, is essential in medieval redemption theology, especially that of Bernard of Clairvaux.³⁵⁶ Humans return to God by way of confrontation with the suffering Christ, and we have seen how Suso understands this process of return and arousing of divine love by means of genuine *compassio* and, most importantly, by means of following Christ through tribulations.³⁵⁷ This concise and intriguing passage shows a theoretical approach to the idea of humans as *speculum divinitatis* and *imago trinitatis*. Such ideas are, of course, not unique to Suso’s *philosophia spiritualis*; the passage draws both on a pseudo-Bernardian treatise, on Augustine’s *On the Trinity*, and on St Thomas’s *Summa theologiae*.³⁵⁸ In addition, Suso’s

³⁵⁵ Watch 155; Hor. 453.4-17 *Homo enim tantum praesentia respicit, Deus autem future et aeterna cognoscit. Tu autem in nostra spirituali philosophia aliter institutes consurge (...) Surge igitur de viscose obscoenitate temporalium delectationum. Aperi oculos mentales, et vide quid sis, ubi sis, et quo tendas; tunc profecto horum omnium rationem habere valebis. Tu namque es speculum divinitatis, eo quod in te principalius quam in ceteris creaturis Deus reluceat; imago trinitatis, eo quod eius imago in te resplendeat, exemplar aeternitatis, eo quod inviolabili incorruptione gaudeas. Et sicut ego in essentia mea sum infinitus, sic desiderium animae tuae est velut interminabilis abyssus, ad cuius repletionem omnia simul gaudia mundi non sufficerent, sicut nec unica gutta oceanum sua exiguitate replere posset.*

³⁵⁶ See Bynum (2007), pp. 197-8.

³⁵⁷ Bynum (2007), p. 198.

³⁵⁸ See Künzle (1977), p. 453. The pseudo-Bernardian treatise is *Meditationes devotissimae ad humanae conditionis cognitionem* (PL 184 485 A). On Augustine’s *De trinitate* and the image of God, see e.g. Louth (1981/2007), pp. 141-53.

articulations of the way of knowledge of God through “speculation,” that is by knowing through God’s reflection in creatures, reveals an important influence from Bonaventure, as Kurt Ruh has shown.³⁵⁹ Similarly, the soul’s “boundless abyss” of desire (*desiderium animae tuae est velut interminabilis abyssus*) in the final sentence, reformulates a central idea in Bonaventure’s thinking on the disposition of humans.³⁶⁰

The relationship of adversity on earth to eternity is something that most people, “entangled in this world” and “weak in faith” are unable to realize. “Such is the preeminence of eternal glory over every temporal and transitory suffering that anyone who takes care to see things as they are should rather choose to want to be tormented for years “in a furnace of burning fire” [Dn 3.6] than wish to be deprived of the smallest reward reserved for him in the future; for labor has its end, the reward has no end.”³⁶¹

Let us make a quick comparison: Suso also employs this bonaventurian idea of God mirrored in creatures in the final part of his *Vita*, and he defines the recognition or knowledge of this as “speculation.”³⁶² With this definition, the *Vita* introduces a series of passages where the servant and his spiritual daughter Elsbeth Stagel converse on the soul and mystical union, explicitly intended for ‘advancing minds’. We see that Suso, in this extract from *Horologium*, indeed suggests the possibility for humans to “rejoice in an inviolable incorruption,” but only quite

³⁵⁹ Ruh (1996), pp. 456-8; See also Mossman (2010), pp. 137-8.

³⁶⁰ See Schlosser (2002), p. 127.

³⁶¹ *Watch* 194-95 *Hor.* 487.11-23 *Denique si in astrologica disciplina floreret, et omnium liberalium artium secreta penetraret; si admirabilis in omni sapientia appareret; si cunctos rhetores ac dialecticos facundia et argutis praeires: haec omnia non tantum ad bonam tibi vitam conferrent, quantum hoc unum ad salutem necessarium, scilicet ex 'caritate de corde puro et conscientia bona et fide non ficta' te ipsum deserere, et totum te Deo in omni tribulatione committere, eiusque voluntati parere patienter. Nam illud bonis et malis commune est; istud autem solis electis inesse potest. Tanta est praeeminencia aeternae gloriae ad temporales ac transitorias passiones, ut diligens perspector deberet potius eligere multis annis 'in fornace ignis ardentis' velle torqueri, quam minimum praemio in futurum sibi reservato velle privari; quia labor cum fine, merces sine fine.*

³⁶² *Vita* ch. 50 172.5-6 *...dis bekennen heisset ein speculieren*; Cf. *Exemplar* 187. See also Ruh (1996), p. 459.

briefly, and only a few are able to attain this.³⁶³ Unlike the *Vita*, where Suso thus finds occasions for extensive explorations of “high teaching,”³⁶⁴ the *Horologium* does not dwell on such matters. Moreover, this summary of authoritative insight on the reflection of God in humans occurs in a specific context. It rounds off the ninth chapter, which is about *tribulatio*, and it occurs as a response to the problem of people drawing away from God because they cannot bear the hardships imposed on them. It also serves as an introduction to the next two chapters, about Hell and Heaven (I, 10-11). These are visions of the afterlife by which the disciple and the reader are given to understand how tribulations, despised by “this insane world” (*hoc mundo insanissimo*),³⁶⁵ are infinitely better than the torments of hell, and that they are certain indications of the awaiting joys of Heaven for the afflicted friends of God. A theoretical passage is put to the immediate service of a practical and personal meditation on the last things. This vision of hell immediately follows the quoted passage on the image of God. It is clear from this immediate context that the encouragement to “stand up and see what you are, where you are and where you are going” (*vide quid sis, ubi sis, et quo tendas*)³⁶⁶ entails a meditation on the afterlife and, hence on humans’ situation *coram Deo*.³⁶⁷

The main point we want to draw from this, is that Suso, with his teaching on the *tribulatio* of the elect, calls on his readers to contemplate the ‘last things’.³⁶⁸ The category of the elect is an eschatological category. On almost all occasions, the term is used to suggest that the suffering of the friends of God on earth lead to

³⁶³ Chapters 46-54 in the *Vita* are devoted in full to discussions about the *Kunst rechter gelassenheit*, “Art of true detachment.” *Vita*, 155-200; *Exemplar* 174-209; See Ruh, (1996), pp. 452-68.

³⁶⁴ *Vita* 172.7-8 *Nu lass úns ein wili alhie belieben, und lass úns speculieren den hohen wirdigen meister in siner getat!*; *Exemplar* 187 “Now let us stay here a while and let us speculate in the exalted worthy Master in his work.”

³⁶⁵ *Watch* 495; *Hor.* 488.15.

³⁶⁶ On tribulation as source of self-knowledge in *De duodecim utilitatibus*, see Auer (1952) 81; Haas (1993).

³⁶⁷ Grosse, although he comments on a later source, Jean Gerson’s works, says that there is a shift of emphasis “from *causa* to *coram*”; this might be applied to Suso as well and his relationship to scholastic theology.

³⁶⁸ We do not find the *quattor novissima*, the four last things, in the shape of a fixed “meditation complex,” which seems to be a somewhat later convention. See Byrn (1983) and Hjelde (2010).

salvation in the ‘next world’.³⁶⁹ The following passage is from Suso’s vision about the “joys of heaven” (I, 11) and it describes the *electi* who have merited salvation and who reside in heaven together with the rest of God’s court.³⁷⁰

... see how the holy Apostles and “my friends” (Jn 15.14) are seated before all others with the highest honor, and are given the power to judge (Mt 19.28), and how the martyrs shine out “with rosy color,” (...) So, no less blessed and happy are those bidden to such a banquet and elected by God to merit that they join in such a company!³⁷¹

Tribulation, Insufficiency, and Indulgence

With the notions of the Afterlife pressing on, *tribulatio* is outlined as a secure path to salvation. On several occasions, Suso speaks of an acquisition of merit in relation to *tribulatio* or *adversitas*. His vision of heaven (I, 11) is completed with an encouragement: “It is now the time for you to fight (...) This is the time for you to gain merit.”³⁷² Suso can speak of the “merit” of patience; without the “spirit’s toleration of adversities in this life” one cannot *merit* to sing with “a joyous heart in the palace of heaven.”³⁷³ In the discussion of “divine consolations,” it is said that tribulations are more meritorious than consolations.³⁷⁴ It seems then, that humans can and should acquire merit through endurance of adversity.

³⁶⁹ See, e.g., *Hor.* 458.2.; 462.2.; 464.19-20; 467.6; 482.10; 558.16; 580.30; 583.5; see also 416.22; 431.15; 605.2; 458.21.

³⁷⁰ See especially *Watch* 161; 165; *Hor.* 458.21; 462.2.

³⁷¹ *Watch* 167; *Hor.* 464.10-20 *Adhuc conversus, vide qualiter sancti apostoli et 'amici mei' praecipui cum summo honore in iudicaria resident potestate, et qualiter martyres rutilant 'roseo colore', confessores radiant igneo fulgore, virginesque emicant 'niveo candore': tota denique caelestis frequentia quomodo divina affluit dulcedine, repletur iucunditate. Haec caelestia agmina, simul iuncta, cum ineffabili ducentes choros laetitiae, coram throno sua depromunt modulamina. Egrediens inde 'fluminis impetus', mentes ipsorum 'inebriat voluptate', ora replet iucunditate. O quam felix civitas, ubi iugis sollemnitates; et quam iucunda curia, quae curae prorsus nescia. Beati proinde et felices, qui ad tantum convivium invitati sunt, qui tali consortio electione divina interesse meruerunt.* Cf. *Bdew* 243.24-244.5

³⁷² *Watch* 171; *Hor.* 468.17-18 *Tempus pugnandi tibi adest, non venit hora regnandi. Tempus instat merendi, non venit tempus remunerandi*

³⁷³ *Watch* 199; *Hor.* 491.10-12

³⁷⁴ See above, pp. 41-6.

Yet, time and again the *Horologium* reminds us of a conception that was strongly present in later medieval piety and theology, namely the notion of the *insufficiency* of human works.³⁷⁵

Several theologians in the later Middle Ages, including Heinrich Suso, express the idea of an *immensity of guilt* of humans before God. This guilt element is intensified and, significantly, reinterpreted: Sven Grosse has observed a tendency of conceiving of guilt as ‘total’ and equal to existence after the fall, as opposed to an earlier understanding, which emphasizes factual guilt³⁷⁶ and a system of penitence that relied on a direct relationship of particular sins and particular works of satisfaction.

As Suso in the *Horologium* emphasizes, the immensity of the satisfaction brought about with the passion cannot be equaled by human means; he repeatedly states that it is impossible for humans to give a worthy response (*rependere vicem tanto redemptori ex condigno non posses*), even if they “had the power of all created beings,” if they “were gifted to perform all men’s good works.”³⁷⁷ Chapter fifteen states that all the efforts in the world could not make sufficient recompense, not even for the least drop of blood that was shed during the passion—which was seen typically as a copious flow.³⁷⁸

As is so often the case, this notion of insufficiency of human works before God is a much older idea. With reference to Isaiah (64.6), Bernard of Clairvaux spoke of human justice as the “cloth of a bleeding woman.”³⁷⁹ A basic understanding of the insufficiency of human works was formulated by Thomas Aquinas, namely that God’s grace cooperates with human efforts, which make these condign.³⁸⁰ Around the fourteenth century, however, this theme of insufficiency is

³⁷⁵ See Zumkeller (1959).

³⁷⁶ In his book on Jean Gerson, Sven Grosse speaks of a reinterpretation of guilt, into a “Schuldbewusstsein höherer Ordnung,” according to which ‘Creation’ equals ‘Fall’. Such a ‘total’ guilt is expressed in that the whole of life is to be a “Gestus” of humility before God. (1994), pp. 135-6.

³⁷⁷ *Watch* 214; *Hor.* 504.23-505.4

³⁷⁸ *Watch* 215; *Hor.* 505.27-31.

³⁷⁹ Isaiah 64:6 is evoked frequently by theologians in the later Middle Ages. See Zumkeller (1959), esp. pp. 266.

³⁸⁰ According to Thomas Aquinas, human works of satisfaction are not condign, and thus in themselves not sufficient, but they may still “be termed sufficient imperfectly” (*dici satisfatio*

strongly intensified, as has been observed in sermons by a large range of theologians from the fourteenth century.³⁸¹ A disregard for outer works and an emphasis on divine grace and election can also be observed in saints' lives from the same period.³⁸² Suso and his *Horologium* is no exception to this trend. In almost all instances where the word *meritum* occurs in relation to *homini*, it is used in a negative sense. That is to say, it expresses the gaping hole of human insufficiency.

This notion seems to have infected practical life and caused feelings of an inability of "wretched sinners" to give a suitable response to God (*respondere vices*). On several occasions, Suso is concerned with states of *duritia* and inability, exemplified through the disciple, and this can partly be seen as such a difficulty founded on a sense of insufficiency. This again is closely related to an intensified eschatology and the experience of a threatening proximity of judging and punishing forces, and also to the prevailing notions of demonic presence in the world.³⁸³ One of the prayers expressed by the Disciple in the last part of the *Horologium* puts to words this gulf between humans and the grace of God: "Deal with us, Lord, not according to the poverty of our merits, but as befits your lovable and most loving goodness. For all our health depends upon your clemency."³⁸⁴ At the same time as they emphasized guilt and insufficiency and the judging force of God and the threats of the afterlife, theologians also sought to support the devout who felt weak and afraid and provided people with means to access and secure for themselves the equally immense power of divine grace. In a number of studies, Berndt Hamm has shown that it is precisely in this effort of balancing a pressing eschatology and fear of sin with an 'accessibility of grace' that late medieval

sufficiens imperfecte) because of God's acceptance. This is because God's satisfaction "cooperates." *STh* I q. 1 a. 2 ad 2 *Alio modo potest dici satisfactio sufficiens imperfecte, scilicet secundum acceptationem eius qui est ea contentus, quamvis non sit condigna.*

³⁸¹ Zumkeller (1959) sees this theme in sermons by preachers of a wide range of affinities, including John Tauler.

³⁸² Cf. Vauchez (2005), p. 533.

³⁸³ See Hamm (2010b); Dinzelbacher (1996).

³⁸⁴ *Watch* 317; *Hor.* 593.6-8 *Fac nobiscum, domine, non secundum nostrum meritum parvitatem, sed secundum quod decet tuam amabilem atque piissimam bonitatem. In tua namque clementia dependet tota salus nostra.*

theology of piety was a most innovative movement that came up with a diversity of approaches to this challenge.³⁸⁵

One such approach can be seen in Suso's remarkable teaching on indulgences in chapter fourteen of the *Horologium*. It will be seen that this teaching on indulgences bears a close resemblance to the idea of *tribulatio/adversitas*.

Suso's teaching in indulgence is based on passion meditation. Suso understands passion meditation to be immensely effective, even to the point of *removing purgatorial punishment*. It is no coincidence that it is also in this chapter that we can see one of his strongest expressions of disregard for human works of satisfaction.

In this chapter, Eternal Wisdom instructs the Disciple in how to obtain the effect of the passion through "frequent meditation" on it.³⁸⁶ There are two principal effects of passion meditation to which Suso wants to call specific attention ("among others which cannot be numbered"). First, the recollection of the passion has the effect of softening hardened hearts and of giving relief from conditions of sadness and *duritia* and depression, as it focuses the attention on the sorrow of Christ instead of one's own sorrow.³⁸⁷ Second, meditation of the passion "lessens the punishment in purgatory" (*Poenam purgatorii diminuendam*).

For this richest treasury, because of his great love, his most worthy Person and his most immense sorrow, is sufficient and superabundant; and therefore a man could in this way have recourse to that treasury, and devoutly draw for himself on the Lamb's merits and satisfactions, so that even if he ought to purge himself a thousand years long, in a short time he would be set free from it all.³⁸⁸

Suso explains by using the example of a mortal sinner who, because of his evil deeds, was to end up in "purgatory's infernal regions" and suffer endless torments

³⁸⁵ See, e.g., the first three essays in Hamm (2004).

³⁸⁶ *Watch* 200-201; *Hor.* 492-8, the chapter is titled *Quam utile sit passionem Christi iugiter habere in memoria*.

³⁸⁷ *Watch* 204; *Hor.* 495-96 On the problem of *duritia* and inordinate sorrow, see above, pp. 70-74.

³⁸⁸ *Watch* 205; *Hor.* 496.21-26 *Hic namque thesaurus pretiosissimus propter caritatem maximam personamque dignissimam ac dolorem immensissimus sufficiens et superabundans exstat; et ideo taliter posset se homo ad hunc applicare et de eius merito et satisfaction tam devote ad se trahere, ut si mille annis deberet purgari, in brevi de toto liberaretur.*

since he had not “made satisfaction for a thousandth part of whatever mortal sins he committed.”³⁸⁹ Although the example is extreme, he stresses a general opinion, that due satisfaction from the part of humans is impossible. Yet, there is easy and brief satisfaction, even for such a sinner, if only he knows “how to obtain that satisfaction from the treasury of the Passion of the immaculate Lamb.”

Suso now goes on and describes a procedure, a “most useful skill” (*artem utilissimam*) of attaining this treasure. The procedure entails, firstly, a profound *personal confession*. Penitentiary psalms are engaged and accompanied by mental exercises (‘*Gestures*’) of abasement and humility before the “eternal Judge.”³⁹⁰ Second, we see that part of this “skill” (*ars*) or procedure of obtaining the treasure, is “to make nothing of your works of satisfaction, as if they were of no moment” (*opera tua ... annihilare*).³⁹¹ We see here a strong expression of disregard for human works of satisfaction, in line with the mentioned trend; not only are human works insufficient, they are to be regarded as *nothing*.³⁹² The following part of this procedure is to “extol and magnify the passion”; as Suso continues, we see that this is based on the concept of the *superabundance* of Christ’s satisfaction: “the least drop of the most precious blood which flowed freely through my wounds in every part of my body would be sufficient for the redemption and satisfaction of the whole world.”³⁹³

We see in this passage the juxtaposition of human insufficiency with the immensity of Christ’s satisfaction that is so characteristic for the polarized theology of this period. Arnold Angenendt has given attention to this teaching of Suso as a quite radical alternative to the doctrine and institution of indulgences, which

³⁸⁹ *Watch* 205; *Hor.* 496.14-15

³⁹⁰ See Grosse (1994), p. 135-6. See *Watch* 205-6; *Hor.* 497 (drawing on Ps 50; 21; 31); and *Watch* 191; *Hor.* 484.9-10.

³⁹¹ *Watch* 206; *Hor.* 497.16 ..*opera tua satisfactoria, quasi nullius momenti sint, annihilare*..

³⁹² See Zumkeller (1959) for the same tendency in Tauler, and many other preachers in the same period.

³⁹³ Kurt Ruh (1950) holds this idea of superabundance to be reliant on Aquinas, whereas Stephen Mossman has recently observed that it goes back to Anselm of Canterbury (2010), p. 115 n. 206.

was being established in this period.³⁹⁴ That Suso deviates from the ‘official’ teaching of Thomas Aquinas is seen in his use of the term “treasury” (*thesaurus*). This alludes, of course, to the idea of the treasury of merits, or the treasure of the Church (*thesaurus ecclesiae*), a concept that was developed in the thirteenth century and that became fundamental for the entire system of institutionalized granting of indulgences: the Church administered the merits of Christ and all the saints on behalf of Christians, and with these merits, relief from purgatory could be attained.³⁹⁵ For Thomas, the treasure of merits had three main aspects: the merit of Christ and the Saints; the Church’s power as administrator of this treasure/merit; and, its effect in Purgatory.³⁹⁶ For Suso, the treasure of merit means the merit of Christ alone; the power of the keys is substituted by a purely personal meditative approach. What Suso presents in this chapter is a radical teaching of immediate access to Christ’s merits by way of meditation and “annihilation” of one’s works. Implicitly, he also goes against a major trend of *quantification* of indulgences, a ‘system’ that was based upon specific efforts as correspondent to a

³⁹⁴ For a recent publication of studies on indulgence in medieval religion, see Swanson (ed.) (2006). The classic study of indulgences is Nikolaus Paulus’ work *Geschichte des Ablasses im Mittelalter* (1922-23/2000); see also Angenendt (2004; 1995 (et al.)), pp. 44-6. In his article on Suso’s indulgence teaching, Angenendt pointed to the interesting fact that this teaching is written almost at the time as another important document in the history of indulgences, the papal bull *Unigenitus* (1343). With this bull comes an important step in the process of developing an institutionalized system of indulgence, as a new conception of jurisdictional indulgence is formulated, an idea that attaches the distribution of indulgences firmly to the Church hierarchy and the power of the keys. Quite contrary to a jurisdictional interpretation of indulgence, Suso focuses on an immediate access to the superabundance of merit through personalized passion meditation. Angenendt also mentions that the extensive use of Thomas Aquinas’ teaching in these “indulgence passages” cannot conceal Suso’s radicalism, and he thinks that the ideas of Thomas are elicited by Suso for the purpose of “Absicherung,” of securing his own teaching. Angenendt (1980), pp. 148-9. See also Haas (1996), pp. 125-48. Both scholars draw lines between this thought of Suso and the ideas of Martin Luther, not in the sense of any apparent direct influence, but in terms of an intellectual community on this matter. See Mossman (2010), pp. 109-12, who also points to a more direct influence of Suso’s idea on Ludolph of Saxony. Suso’s influence on Marquard von Lindau in this case is less apparent, but Mossman finds an intellectual kinship, see pp. 111-12. See also comments on *Horologium* I, 14 in Hamm (2004), p. 122-23.

³⁹⁵ For the development of the teaching of the *thesaurus ecclesiae*, see Paulus (1922-23/2000), vol. II, pp. 199; 208. There were varying opinions concerning the *thesaurus* in this period, and several theologians expressed doubt as to whether it included the merits of saints. See Paulus (1922-23/2000), vol. III, pp. 153-56.

³⁹⁶ See Angenendt (1980).

fixed numbers of years of relief from purgatory.³⁹⁷ By and large, the quantified indulgence piety was officially sanctioned.³⁹⁸

Evoking the effect of the passion by way of meditative immersion not only shortens punishment in purgatory; the main goal seems to be to *change* (*commutare*) the purgatorial punishment altogether into a ‘punishment’ that is executed in life.³⁹⁹ With the superabundant satisfaction of Christ acquired by means of meditation, and as this copious flow of blood could redeem the entire human race, why then the need for additional suffering on the way to salvation? This question is asked by the disciple toward the end of the chapter. The answer, this time in strict accordance with the teaching of Aquinas, is that although a superabundance of satisfaction is stored up for humans, it is also necessary that we conform ourselves to Christ “by some sort of punishment or suffering.” Suso finishes chapter fourteen with a near verbatim rendering of a passage from the *Summa Theologiae*, and we see the relationship between passion recollection, meditation and tribulation. Here Suso employs Thomas’ term *conformatio*.

Because not only should a man seek after the effects of this passion, he must be conformed to it. He is conformed to it by baptism, in which those who so renounce their past sins are freed entirely from them. But it is necessary that those who sin after baptism should be conformed to the suffering of Christ by some sort of punishment or suffering, which they should endure in themselves, even though far less than what the sin deserves may suffice when the satisfaction we have spoken of cooperates.⁴⁰⁰

In light of this indulgence teaching, it is interesting to see that the tribulatio teaching is expressed in quite similar terms. Among the benefits of tribulations is the

³⁹⁷ Angenendt et al. (1995), pp. 41-71, and (2004), pp. 97-9, with further references. See also Paulus (1923/2000), vol. III, pp. 248-55; Hamm (2010b), pp. 479-81, and (2009), p. 46.

³⁹⁸ See Angenendt (1980). The *Bdew* version makes this criticism even more explicit than the *Horologium*, but on number of occasions throughout the *Horologium*, Suso expresses an unwillingness to ‘quantify’ devotional efforts in relation to the afterlife, as seen above.

³⁹⁹ *Watch* 205; *Hor.* 497.5-6.

⁴⁰⁰ *Watch* 207; *Hor.* 498.23-29 *Ad hoc, quod homo consequatur effectum passionis huius, oportet ipsum ei configurari. Configuratur autem ei per baptismum, unde illi ex toto liberantur, qui sic decedunt. Se oportet, ut illi, post baptismum peccant, configurentur Christo patienti per aliquid poenalitatis vel passionis, quam in se ipsis sustineant, quae tamen multo minor sufficit quam esset condign peccata, cooperante satisfactione praedicta.* See Künzle (1977), p 498; the source in Aquinas is *STh* III, q. 49, a. 3, ad 2.

ability to “remove sin” and “shorten purgatory.” Suso refers to tribulations as a “treasure”; the passion chapter (I, 15) speaks of patient suffering as a way of access to the “superabundance of grace.”⁴⁰¹ Suso uses expressions that are close to the *totiens quotiens* formulations that were used in formalized indulgence statements (“Every time you do this,” e.g. a certain prayer, a specific number of years of relief from purgatory is granted).⁴⁰² Suso uses a similar formulation to articulate how Christ’s presence is brought about in devout hearts: *every time* they flee the world, strip away their self-will, and endure angry reproaches patiently, then Christ’s passion is reenacted and shines through them.⁴⁰³ The *totiens quotiens* dynamic, or ‘automatism’, commonly used in indulgence statements,⁴⁰⁴ serves here to add further emphasis on conformity with Christ in this life instead of punishment in the next.

Suso’s concept of *tribulatio* is extremely Christ-centered. *Tribulatio*, or alternative formulations such as patience in adversity, are often formulated together with the motive of keeping the memory of the passion in one’s heart, by “frequent recollection” or “frequent meditation.” Tribulation and recollection of the passion are two sides of the coin; together these two aspects form a total sum of Christ-centered devotion, which provides access to the merits of Christ.⁴⁰⁵

Whereas Suso often expresses doubt in the value of human works, he may, on other occasions, praise the benefits of tribulations and patience as meritorious. The *tribulatio* ideal should be seen as an articulation of God’s *cooperation* with humans. The bottom line is that all merit is drawn from the “treasure” of Christ’s passion, and that, in the end, we should regard our works of satisfaction as “nothing.”⁴⁰⁶ Again, this points us to the understanding of *tribulatio* as essentially an appropriation of the works of Christ. It is on this account that hardships can have their many salutary benefits, as we have seen above in Suso’s extensive catalogue of the “fruits of tribulation.” Tribulations, he said, “...takes away sin, it shortens

⁴⁰¹ See above, pp. 89-90.

⁴⁰² See Hamm (2009), pp. 46-8.

⁴⁰³ See above, p. 85.

⁴⁰⁴ See Paulus (1922-23/2000), vol. III, esp. pp. 248-52.

⁴⁰⁵ See *Watch* 215; *Hor.* 505.9-11.

⁴⁰⁶ *Watch* 206; *Hor.* 497.16.

purgatory, it repels temptations (...) It is the health-giving draft, the plant more healing than all those of the earthly paradise.”⁴⁰⁷ Such praises closely resemble Suso’s wording when he praises the benefits of passion meditation in chapters fourteen and fifteen. Tribulations, in other words, are meritorious as they are sustained in inner identification with Christ and thus *derive* from his superabundant works. Similarly, the salvific effect of *patientia* derives from the satisfaction of Christ. On their own humans are incapable of being made acceptable to God through their works; it is because *tribulatio* and their endurance is so closely related to Christ’s passion that they are meritorious. By suffering adversities patiently, and by keeping the memory of the passion present in their hearts, devotees obtain the treasure of merit that the “sacrifice of the Lamb” produced for the human race.

Tribulatio bridges the gap between the seemingly infinite guilt of humans due to sin and the insufficiency of humans on the one side and the immense saving forces entailed in the Passion of Christ on the other. The only way to bridge this gap is for Suso to obtain the effect of Christ’s passion; the *tribulatio* teaching is outlined as a way to establish a close relationship between tribulations and the inner human. In a number of ways, he encourages his readers and intended audience to keep the passion present in the heart, and to offer one’s adversities to it. That is to say, the patient sufferer reports to Christ, not to the world.

What we need to observe, then, is that this way of obtaining the astonishing merit of Christ, through passion meditation or, as we are mainly concerned with here, through a “piety of representation” where adversities are endured in identification with Christ—this is not something that is accessible only to the advancing mystic or the heroic saint-like sufferers. Our reading has shown us that *tribulatio* is a concept that serves to interpret a range of everyday religious phenomena, such as hardness of heart during Eucharistic celebration, accusation from an envious neighbor, or the loss of a friend. *Tribulatio*, in this light, means mediation of grace, channels of accessible relief.

⁴⁰⁷ See above, p. 39.

The Angry Judge I

Suso's *Horologium* ponders on the powerful images of the 'Last Things'—Death, Judgment, Hell and Heaven. This is necessary, Suso claims, because "nowadays" too few people are aware of the anger of the judge and the severity of his judgment, or of the joys of the highest heaven, for that matter.⁴⁰⁸ Time and again he reminds his reader that awareness of the Afterlife is crucial; the *ratio* of tribulations, as he holds at the end of chapter nine, is found in the connection to the Afterlife and, more specifically, of the strict judgment of God over sinners. The fundamental idea was that God let no sin go unpunished. Awareness of God's strict justice and anger makes the elect suffer willingly, as they want to avoid the suffering in the hereafter, which was commonly regarded as infinitely worse than any suffering on Earth.⁴⁰⁹

An interesting development of the idea of judgment is seen in the later medieval period. The image of Christ's appearance on Judgment Day, which is based upon the account in the Gospel of Matthew was a dominant motive in art and theology throughout the later Middle Ages.⁴¹⁰ However, parallel to this idea of a general and final judgment (*iudicium generale*), people in the later Middle Ages became increasingly aware of another idea of judgment, namely of an individual judgment (*iudicium particulare*), that was thought to occur immediately after death. It was commonly agreed that whereas Christ would eventually appear on Judgment Day, it was God who executed individual judgment. Those twofold concepts of judgment were held also by theologians such as Thomas Aquinas.⁴¹¹ Against this background of a twofold concept of judgment, it is interesting to observe that among all passages in Suso's *Horologium* that mention the Judge—and there are many—none of them seem to suggest a concept of *final* judgment. They are all about *iudicium particulare*, individual judgment. It is always God, and

⁴⁰⁸ *Watch* 133; *Hor.* 434.18

⁴⁰⁹ See, e.g., *Watch* 156; *Hor.* 454.17-21.

⁴¹⁰ See Schwartz (1981); Dinzelbacher (1999).

⁴¹¹ See Dinzelbacher (1999).

not Christ, who appears as the judge in the *Horologium*.⁴¹² Judgment is carried out either by God himself, or, by God and his court of saints, where also the *electi* are said to partake; nonetheless, it is always about individual judgment.⁴¹³ Most often, the judge appears in the form of an intense mental image that confronts the individual with God's anger, and thus also his own sinfulness and his need for aiding forces so as to avoid severe punishment.

Berndt Hamm has commented on this prevalent motive of the angry judge in late medieval 'theology of piety'. He speaks of a "new severity in the fight against sin and vice," a tendency that runs parallel with the "promise of God's unheard-of grace."⁴¹⁴ Hamm observed this polarity mainly in sources from around 1500,⁴¹⁵ but this observation can be made also in the *Horologium*. The polarity of God's 'near grace' and his 'near judgment'⁴¹⁶ is indeed a most striking feature in Suso's book. A 'built-in' tension between the lovable Wisdom/Christ and the incredibly angry God-judge is seen, for instance, in chapter seven of Book I, where the title alone comprises the whole issue: "How Divine Wisdom is at Once Lovable and Terrible." The title relates to the preceding chapter, where Eternal Wisdom, in some of the most high-flown 'bridal passages' in the book, is introduced as the disciple's divine lover. With chapter seven, the pendulum swings as we find the Disciple in an encounter with the incredibly angry judge. In his *visio horribilis* in chapter seven of book one, especially God's angry countenance is repeated;⁴¹⁷ The judge-God's *proximity* and a profoundly *personal* encounter is

⁴¹² Suso *Horologium* does not conform to the general picture that Reinhard Schwartz asserted (1981), namely a development in the later medieval period from fear of God to a fear of Christ as Judge.

⁴¹³ This is best expressed by the dying man in II, 2: "Ah, eternal God, with what shame shall I stand before you and all the saints to be judged, when I am made to give an account of what I have done and failed to do. What shall I have to say?" *Watch* 249; *Hor.* 532.19-21 *Ah Deus aeterne, quam verecunde coram te et sanctis omnibus ad iudicium stabo, cum reddere rationem de transactis commissis et omissis cogor. Et quid adhuc dicam?* See more on Suso's teaching about death and death preparation in chapter three in this study.

⁴¹⁴ Hamm (2004), p. 51.

⁴¹⁵ Hamm points to urban preachers from around 1500 such as Savoranola, Staupitz and Geyler von Keyserberg. (2004), p. 51.

⁴¹⁶ Hamm (2004), p. 52; see also (2010b).

⁴¹⁷ See also *Watch* 34; *Hor.* 435.3-18 ... *terribilis facies ... facie furoris ... facies furibundus*.

demonstrated as the disciple, by way of a ‘mental image’ or a vision, is put before a “throne like flames of fire.”⁴¹⁸ This is a purely literary vision where Suso combines a number of sources from ‘standard’ Christian eschatology: from Daniel (7.9-10), the Apocalypse of John (1.16), and also the image of the angry king from the book of Esther (15.10).⁴¹⁹ “For your fatherly face is not to be borne” the frightened Disciple cries out, “...its severity is so amazing when you turn it to your sons to emend them, not to destroy them, that it may seem to be like hell.”⁴²⁰

In a variety of ways, Suso expresses this astonishing anger: *iudex iratus*⁴²¹ *districtus* or *districtissimus*,⁴²² *tremendus*,⁴²³ *severus*,⁴²⁴ and so on. Suso’s strong notion of a moral and religious crisis is closely related to this intensified notion of the ‘near judge’. As a result of the widespread spiritual decay, as seen especially in the vision of the *civitatis ruinae* (I, 5), God is angrier than ever before. Suso speaks of the clamor that befalls those who persist in their sins,⁴²⁵ and he asks “Who is there who will arise and restrain the angered judge? For in this present day, many who should have placated him are greatly offending him?”⁴²⁶ The task of the spiritual night is to “arise” and to “restrain” and “placate” the angry judge.

⁴¹⁸ *Watch* 134.35; *Hor.* 434.15-21; Cf. *Bdew* 239.23-24: Owe, strenge richter, wie ist min herz so ingruntlich erschrocken. See also *Watch* 151; 254; *Hor* 450.17; 537.2; God is angry, but also *iustus iudex*, “just judge,” another typical medieval theme, however less dominant in *Horologium*. The main emphasis is however on *districtissimus*, as is seen also in Suso’s ‘death book’ (II, 2), *Hor.* 536.30-33 *O districtissime iudex, quam severissima sunt iudicia tua, quam multum ponderas in iudicando me miserum ea, quae pro sui modicitate pauci etiam curare praesumunt; Watch* 254 “O strictest of judges, how dire are your judgments, how heavily, as you judge my wretched soul, do you weigh those sins which most men do not even care about because they seem so petty.”

⁴¹⁹ *Watch* 133 “In some way that cannot be described, that prophetic vision was set before the eyes of my understanding,” *Hor.* 434.8-9.

⁴²⁰ *Watch* 135; *Hor.* 435.22: *Denique tam intolerabilis est paternae faciei tuae ad emendandum, non ad perdendum filios tuos severitas stupenda, ut inferno similis esse videatur.*

⁴²¹ See *Watch* 109; 133; *Hor.* 412.10; 434.18.26

⁴²² *Watch* 93; 400.15;

⁴²³ *Watch* 162; *Hor.* 459.26-29 *O iudex tremende, ecce nunc anima mea ex hac quoque visione horribili territa et prostrata est, et genua dissoluta, ut vix subsistere possim. O 'Deus meus, adiutor meus. ' O mi Deus, averte, obsecro, furorem tuum a me.*

⁴²⁴ *Watch* 196; *Hor.* 488.17.

⁴²⁵ *Watch* 107; *Hor.* 411.1-4. *Clamor, quem audisti, severitas est iustitiae meae super hos, qui nec timore nec amore compuncti peccata deserunt, sed in eis pertinaciter usque ad mortem persistunt.*

⁴²⁶ *Watch* 109; *Hor.* 412.10 *O sacrosancta mater ecclesia, quanta erit tunc tribulatio tua? Quis est qui surgat et teneat iudicem iratum?*

In chapter seven, confronted with God as an angry judge surrounded by smoke and fire, the disciple exclaims:

Do with me in this life whatever will be pleasing to you. Lay laws upon me, increase my tribulations, multiply my adversities, make my infirmities a hundredfold. Whatever may please you I shall bear most willingly, asking only this, that you will deign to spare me from the face of your wrath.⁴²⁷

As the Disciple realizes that God is such an angry judge, he begs for *tribulations*. The crucial ability of tribulations, namely, is that they *appease* the judge, making him milder. A hope related to the abilities of tribulations to soften the judge is expressed also in the servant's prayer, which we have seen: "O most clement God, consider clemently our tribulations, and give us the power to suffer them, and give strength from on high to our weak hearts with your most welcome consolations."⁴²⁸

So you must know that temporal tribulation is vilified by this world, which is indeed quite insane, but by God, the supreme judge, it is esteemed as most precious. Tribulation quenches the Judge's anger, and turns his severity into friendship and kindness. Whoever suffers adversities willingly for God's sake is made like to the suffering Christ, and so is drawn into his embrace and secured by his love as one who is like to him⁴²⁹

Again, *friendship* with God and *appeasement* are the main parts. Suffer willingly makes one like the suffering Christ; a close intimacy and also protection is suggested with "his embrace." With the term *nexu*, Suso insists on tribulatio as the most certain means of salvation.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁷ Watch 134; Hor. 435.7-11 *Fac mihi hoc in tempore quidquid tibi placuerit. Impone leges, adauge tribulationes, adversitates multiplica, infirmitates centuplica. Quidquid tibi placuerit, libentissime feram, hoc solum supplicans, ut a facie furoris tui parcere mihi digneris.*

⁴²⁸ Watch 188; Hor. 481.28-482.2 *O clementissime Deus tribulationes nostras clementer considera, et virtutem patiendi praesta, ac tuis consolationibus corda invalida ex alto confirma.*

⁴²⁹ Watch 195-6; Hor. 488.14-20 *Sciendum ergo, quod temporalis tribulatio ab hoc quidem mundo insanianissimo vilipenditur, a summo autem iudice Deo pretiosa valde aestimatur. Ipsa iram iudicis exstinguit, et eius severitatem in amicitiam et benignitatem convertit. Qui adversa libenter pro Deo patitur, Christo passo assimilatur, et ideo ab eo tamquam a consimili nexu dilectionis praecipuo constringitur.*

⁴³⁰ See Hor. 489.5-10 *Ipsa est 'arta via,' sed secunda et compendiosa 'ducens ad vitam.'* Watch 196.

We said that Christ never appears as a judge. However, Christ still plays a decisive role in individual judgment, namely in the role of an *intercessor*. Christ is able to affect the mood of the angry judge and hence the judgment of souls.⁴³¹ The way Suso expresses this idea is that Christ, still bearing the stigmata, ‘inserts’ his passion (*interponens*) between the angry judge and the sins of the human.⁴³² This act of *interponens* as intercession expresses a well known motive of Christ as *Advokat* in this personal judgment that occurs immediately after death.⁴³³ Suso also attributes to Virgin Mary this important protective and mitigating ability.⁴³⁴

As we have said, the threatening forces of sin and harsh judgment are strongly present, and at the same time protection and means of amelioration and accessibility of grace are constantly invoked. The closeness of tribulations and the passion is the central point of Suso’s teaching. In this part, we see that this teaching has its important meaning in that tribulations, like Christ himself or the Virgin,⁴³⁵ have the decisive function in the drama of the afterlife. Suso evokes the frightening image of the judging God, but he also points to protective forces, and *tribulatio* is one such force. Tribulations *derive* from the Passion of Christ. By enduring the tribulations that God has sent, the devout attain the same ability that Christ and the Virgin has: the ability to restrain the *iudex iratus*.

⁴³¹ See also Chapter Three, esp. pp. 196-99; 234-40.

⁴³² *Watch* 95; *Hor.* 400.11-17 *Agnosce vultum meum. Ego enim sum qui paupertatem sustinui, ut te ditarem, mortem pertuli amarissimam, ut te vivificarem. Ecce hic sto, 'mediator Dei et hominum,' [I tim 2.5] reservata habens crucis stigmata, interponens ipsa districto iudicio aeterni Patris et cunctis peccatis tuis*

⁴³³ Hamm (2010b), p. 463.

⁴³⁴ See also *Watch* 222-23, where the Disciple addresses the Virgin: “You are my hope, my tower, and you I have set up as the goal of all my health. If, God forbid, he, the angry judge, should wish to damn your servant as guilty of sin, let him do this only with your most loving hands. But if by his grace he will decree that I am to be saved, let him deign to send me salvation by your means. I never want to be separated from you, not alive or dead...*Hor.* 511.23: From praise to Mary: *Tu spes mea, turris mea, in qua finem totius salutis meae constitui. Si, quod absit, iudex iratus servum tuum peccati reum damnare voluerit, per manus tuas piissimas hoc faciat. Si autem ex gratia salvare decreverit, te mediante salutem salutem mihi mittere dignetur. Ego a te neque vivus neque mortuus*

⁴³⁵ However, not the saints, as was otherwise quite common. See Hamm (2010b). In line with what we observed earlier concerning the minor role of saints in Suso’s teaching, we see here that saints are not important as intercessors. See above, pp. 50-56.

In this first chapter, we have seen that *tribulatio* in the *Horologium* is a ‘total concept’ that encapsulates the whole of Christian life and its characteristic renunciation of the world. In his many discussions of tribulation and adversity, Suso articulates a concept of election, of spiritual knighthood and personal reorientation towards God. The tribulatio concept is used to emphasize the distinctness of true Christian life in opposition to the rest of the world, which, according to Suso, has become severely depraved. The idea of *tribulatio* articulates an interaction between God and humans and also the oscillation between the various ‘states’ of spiritual life that is so characteristic to Suso’s spirituality.

Tribulatio is a generic term by which Suso articulates a sum of spiritual life and progress that begins here and ends with final salvation, and perhaps even without the intermediary stay in Purgatory. Tribulation essentially means imitation of the suffering Christ. Hence, by way of inner identification and a particularly medieval understanding of presence, *tribulatio* opens access to the ‘superabundance of grace’ that the passion contained. For this reason, according to Suso’s idea of indulgence, tribulations have the ability of diminishing purgatory and of avoiding harsh judgment.

So far, we have seen in the *Horologium* a ‘theology of piety’ that emphasizes the inner and immediate mediation of grace from God to humans, a mediation structured by the idea of sustaining *adversitas*. Suso’s idea of tribulation is outlined as a form of devotion, and also of ‘grace meditation’, that does not emphasize the institution of the Church, but is played out on an individual level in intimacy with Christ. In the next chapter, we shall see that Suso emphasizes not only the inner dimension of piety. In his teaching on Eucharistic devotion, Suso, unlike many of the mystics with whom he is usually associated, expresses a rather ‘sacramentalist’ teaching, although neither this part is void of mystical content. As in this first chapter, the next chapter will explore how Suso deals with problems such as *duritia* (‘hardness of heart’) and other forms of spiritual deficiency, problems that could become particularly acute, we will see, in confrontation with the Holy Sacrament.

Chapter Two: Eucharist Devotion

In this part of our study, we shall explore Heinrich Suso's views on Eucharist devotion, which is the main theme in the fourth chapter of Book II of the *Horologium sapientiae*. This is, by far, the longest chapter in the *Horologium*, and, as we will see, it is very rich in content.

For Suso devotion to the Eucharist was a main 'element of piety.' We find long poetic praises of the wonders of the sacrament and God's presence in it and of the numerous 'fruits' that the sacrament provides. We find exhortations to Eucharist devotion on various levels that show the wide range of Suso's approach to spirituality: from Eucharist mysticism of the advanced spirits to strategies intended for those who struggled with the difficulties of spiritual life.

Through the voices of Eternal Wisdom and the Disciple, Suso focuses attention on several major tenets of Eucharist teaching; among these is the ideal *attitude* toward the sacrament, and its many 'fruits,' that is to say, the effects of the Eucharist. We shall see that Suso, in this chapter, gives much attention to *faith* as a basic category for Eucharist devotion, and in doing so he also warns against some of the pitfalls that were associated with the sacrament. We will also discuss Suso's stance regarding some particular concerns of Eucharist practice that were much debated during this time, such as the correct *frequency of communion* and the issues of *sacramental and spiritual communion*. Finally, we shall see how Suso deals with a particular concern among later medieval theologians, namely the problem of *fear of the Eucharist*.

The centrality of the Eucharist in Suso's teaching is in line with the religiosity of this period in general. It is difficult to overstate the importance of this sacrament in medieval religiosity. It was a focal point of religious life and concerned everyone. The Eucharist was a powerful symbol of the 'near grace' of God in the world; it was also a symbol of the power of the Church. As theologians widely

agreed, the Eucharist held a special position among the sacraments. The sacrament of the Altar not only mediated grace, but also *contained* grace. In it, God was really present in the world. An impressive body of Eucharist theology was developed within schools, where theologians attempted to explain theoretically, and with philosophy as means, the implications of that amazing change in the host that occurred on altars every day, in every corner of the Christian world. Despite the difficulties of explaining the theories about this presence, the centrality of the sacrament was strengthened during the later medieval period. This presence was an object of intense devotion, superstition, awe, and even outright fear, something that is reflected in Suso's dialogue, as we will see in this chapter.

Eucharist theology and practice have received much attention by scholars within various fields of medieval studies.⁴³⁶ Some attention has also been specifically given to mystical Eucharist thought.⁴³⁷ It is, for the most part, within such a framework that Suso's Eucharist teaching has been studied,⁴³⁸ either as part of a trend of Eucharist mysticism, or Suso's texts on the Eucharist have been seen as parts of Suso's mysticism and in light of a detachment teaching in an 'eckhartian' tradition.⁴³⁹ The extensive Eucharist chapter in the *Horologium*, however, has been given relatively little attention.⁴⁴⁰ In this chapter we will also discuss the Eucharist as a mystical occasion, and address the profile of the *Horologium* in relation to contemporary mystical traditions.

The Eucharist dialogue is a good place to explore Suso as an early contributor to 'theology of piety'; it is by far the most extensive chapter of the book, and it takes us directly to some of the pressing issues that Suso deals with in this work as a whole. We will see, for instance, that a problem of *spiritual insufficiency* becomes acute in connection with Eucharist piety, and that this problem calls for solutions.

⁴³⁶ General studies on the Eucharist consulted in this study are Rubin (1991/2002), Snoek (1995), Angenendt (2000), and Macy (1998).

⁴³⁷ See Boeckl (1924), Leppin (2001); Grosse (1994); Hasebrink (2007).

⁴³⁸ Boeckl (1924), pp. 97-98; Leppin (2001) has pointed to one of Suso's letters in the *Briefbuchlein* as an example of Eucharist mysticism. See also Angenendt (2005), pp. 238-43.

⁴³⁹ See Boeckl (1924); See also Ulrich (1994).

⁴⁴⁰ But see Sandra Fenten (2007b).

“The Lord’s body is present in some special way”

As usual in the *Horologium*, the content of this chapter on the Eucharist is structured as a dialogue between the Disciple and Eternal Wisdom. In the first parts, the emphasis is on Christ’s *presence* in the sacrament and the proper devotion, humility and awe that this presence calls for, as well as the importance of faith in this presence, and receives the most attention. The latter parts of the dialogue consist of shorter paragraphs that are more clearly structured by questions and answers related to specific practical issues of Eucharistic preparation and reception. At the end of the chapter, Suso also provides a prayer that is to be said before receiving the Eucharist. We shall now concentrate primarily on the first part of the dialogue.

Although it is structured as a dialogue, the first part of Suso’s Eucharist chapter consists mainly of long poetic praises and elaborations on one central point: the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. These parts include a wide range of images, anecdotes, and examples that have to do with the Eucharistic presence. As usual, the Disciple is the figure of identification for the reader, and these various components of the text serve mainly to awake readers from their spiritual slumber, to realize the majestic-human presence of Christ in the sacrament and to establish an inner sensitivity and acceptance for this presence.

Suso touches on a number of traditional tenets of sacramental theology, such as the teaching on the seven sacraments.⁴⁴¹ Thomas Aquinas is the primary authority of Eucharist teaching and he is indirectly present throughout this chapter, and as Thomas, Suso speaks of the sacraments as the seven “remedies.”⁴⁴² He also maintains that the Eucharistic sacrament holds a unique position among them, an idea that had been established for many centuries and given further emphasis in

⁴⁴¹ This number was established by Peter Lombard and repeated by Thomas Aquinas (although it did not become official doctrine of the Church until the sixteenth century and the Council of Trent). See Davies (1991) p. 346; 49 n. 11.

⁴⁴² *STh* III, q. 63, a 6 c., q. 65, a.1 c.

the high Middle Ages.⁴⁴³ In the voice of Eternal Wisdom, Suso attests to this tradition:

...among [the sacraments], by some way still more excellent, the ray of divine love and a certain flood of heavenly grace, setting devout souls joyfully on fire and sweetly inebriating them, are known to emanate more especially from the Eucharistic sacrament.⁴⁴⁴

The Eucharistic sacrament is a unique medium of grace; this grace is articulated as rays flowing out of the sacrament. Suso often evokes an imagery of light to express the mediation of the sacrament. In addition, importantly, for this mediation to take effect and bring about the *sweetness* of divine presence, a necessary precondition is that the receiver is *devout*. What this means, and the problems that were attached to the requirement of devotion, will be discussed more fully below.

The dialogue invokes a number of standard motives of Medieval Eucharist thought. In the Eucharist, Christ gives the whole of himself; the sacrament conveys both the giver and the gift, *donatem cum dono*.⁴⁴⁵ Christ in the sacrament is referred to as a physician to whom the sick come to be healed—another standard element of Eucharist thought, which points to the necessity of the sacrament on the path to salvation. Another standard motive is that of the Eucharist as a *sacrifice*. This motive of sacrifice is seen in the beginning of the treatise and it is emphatically repeated in the concluding prayer.⁴⁴⁶

Eternal Wisdom sometimes speaks in the voice of the female Sapientia, sometimes as the male Christ. Here Christ himself explains:

So at the Last Supper, I offered myself sacramentally to my beloved disciples, and I delegated to them and to all the ministers of this sacrifice by the power of my words this immense ability, that they may have me present bodily, who am known to be everywhere through the presence of my divinity⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴³ For Thomas Aquinas, the Eucharist was the “crown” of the sacraments. Davies (1991).

⁴⁴⁴ *Watch* 266; *Hor.* 548.14-16 *Inter quae tamen quodam excellentiori modo divini amoris radius ac caelestis gratiae quidam fluvijs devotas animas feliciter incendens ac suaviter inebrians, de sacramento eucharistiae noscitur peculiariter emanare.*

⁴⁴⁵ *Watch* 281; *Hor.* 571.23.

⁴⁴⁶ The prayer is commented on below.

⁴⁴⁷ *Watch* 266-67; *Hor.* 548.23-28 *Proinde in ultima cena dilectis discipulis memet ipsum sacramentaliter obtuli, ipsisque ac omnibus huius sacrificii ministris in virtute verborum meorum*

We observe that from the onset of the dialogue Suso invokes the traditional motive of Christ as the high priest and institutor of the sacrament. He also emphasizes how this act of institution was passed on to the disciples, and thus to the priests of the Church. Thus we immediately observe that he gives prevalence to the actual ritual event, and he points explicitly to the historical embeddedness of the rite in Christ's institution and in the succession via the Apostles. Suso's use of such standard Eucharist motives, and especially that of institution and succession of the sacrifice, is important to notice. This suggests to us that Suso's view on the Eucharist is *sacramental* in comparison with some of his contemporary mystics, who tend to pay much less attention to the actual ritual event and more on the inner encounter that it bespeaks.

Christ's presence in the Eucharist was undisputed. However, it was a difficult concept to explain to an uneducated audience. The theories of Christ's presence under the accidents of the bread and wine, and all the other accompanying problems surrounding the Eucharist, had developed within a specialized scholastic environment. Berndt Hamm points to a characteristic strand in late medieval 'Frömmigkeitstheologie': A *selective* use of scholastic theology, and a selection that stands in the service of shaping devotion and by shutting out the unnecessary. Transformation,⁴⁴⁸ synthesis and simplification of scholastic results are the hallmarks of the new popular theology that emerged in the later Middle Ages.⁴⁴⁹ With an effort of lowering the 'tension' of high teaching theological issues were made accessible to an audience of devotees who were non-specialists but who had a keen interest in theological issues.

Of the most difficult tenets of Eucharist theory to explain to uneducated people was the theoretical problem that is often summarized as the 'doctrine of transubstantiation'. Indeed, as pointed out by Stephen Mossman, the issue of transubstantiation presented such difficulty that some bishops saw the need to

potestatem hanc immensam delegavi, ut me corporaliter praesentem possint habere, qui per divinitatis praesentiam censeor esse ubique.

⁴⁴⁸ Burger (1999; 2001), cf. Hamm (1999).

⁴⁴⁹ Cf. Hamm (1999). p. 10.

instruct their priests not to teach lay people about it.⁴⁵⁰ This theory of the change in the Eucharistic host that occurred with the consecration was developed in the early thirteenth century. Despite the attempts of Thomas Aquinas and others of solving the problem definitively using Aristotelian metaphysics, several theories co-existed throughout the later Middle Ages, as Gary Macy has shown.⁴⁵¹ In Suso's time, this was one of several special problems of Eucharist theory that was subject to ongoing debates in the theological schools.

The Disciple struggles to make sense of the theories that explained Christ's presence in the Eucharistic sacrament:

If I have understood well, you have said that you are in this sacrament, not figuratively, but really, not in intention but bodily. I humbly ask to be taught if this be so, because this would give me much reason for loving you fervently.⁴⁵²

In the voice of Eternal Wisdom, Suso then sets out to provide an adequate presentation of this issue. The real presence and Christ's entering into the host of the Eucharist is presented in a simplified teaching that stresses the marvelous, the astonishing, etc., and often by way of similitude, such as the eye's little pupil being able to "take in the sky's entire hemisphere."⁴⁵³

We see from Suso's text that the phenomenon of change in the host at the moment of consecration is referred to as both *transsubstantiationis* and *transmutationis*.⁴⁵⁴ However, he does not go into further explanation. When he mentions these concepts, they simply point to the presence in the sacrament as "miraculous," something that causes great "astonishment," a wonder that "no tongue has the power to explain." Suso sets himself the task of explaining the real presence in the sacrament in a simple way, by using a number of examples and anecdotes that relate to the basic idea of God's omnipotence. The theoretical concepts simply point to the Sacramental presence as an object of amazement and awe. They are

⁴⁵⁰ Mossman (2010), p. 175.

⁴⁵¹ Macy, (1999) 81-120.

⁴⁵² *Watch* 267. *Hor* 549.4-6 *precor humiliter edoceri, quia hoc magnam praestaret materiam te fervide diligendi*

⁴⁵³ *Watch* 267-68; *Hor* 549.27.

⁴⁵⁴ *Watch* 268; *Hor* 550.8-9. There seems to be no important distinction in meaning between the two terms as used here.

compared with God's creation of the world; if He could do *that*, Eternal Wisdom asks rhetorically, why could he not bring about this miraculous change in the sacramental host?

We also find the much-used image of the broken mirror that is "able to receive a perfect image in each of its fragments".⁴⁵⁵ Wisdom provides this example not in order to discuss the problem of *concomitance* in detail, for which this figure is often used, but in order to give the Disciple, "who knows nothing of optical science," another example of something that is simply quite amazing, and that he should not scrutinize any further.⁴⁵⁶ Similarly, in the passage cited above where Suso points to Christ's institution of the sacrament, another of the challenging concepts of Eucharist teaching is suggested, namely the concept of *ubiquity*.⁴⁵⁷ Typical of Suso's treatment however, is that he does not provide further discussion of any such concept, but simply refers to God's omnipotence.

The use of the technical terms such as transubstantiation in this text are good examples of what Christoph Burger has coined as *transformation* of scholastic teaching into a simpler, more popularized form. The Disciple, as usual, plays the role of a simple person. With this figure as a literary 'device,' Suso saturates a basic requirement for knowledge about the Eucharist. This has a direct practical appliance: for the sacrament to 'work' the receiver had to have a certain level of awareness of what it actually *was* that was received.⁴⁵⁸

A Solid Foundation: Faith and Devotion

In this part, we shall discuss important aspects of Eucharist teaching in Suso's text: the requirement of *devotion* to Christ in the sacrament, and, on a more fundamental level, *faith* as a basis for devotion.

⁴⁵⁵ *Watch* 267-8; *Hor* 549.26-550.1.

⁴⁵⁶ Künzle observes that the image of the broken mirror was first used by Allain of Lille. However, as usual, we might almost say, it is Thomas Aquinas who is Suso's main authority (*STh* III q. 76, a. 3); see also Willing (2004) p. 190.

⁴⁵⁷ *Watch* 267; *Hor*. 548.26-28... *per divinitatis praesentiam censeor esse ubique*.

⁴⁵⁸ See Aris (2007).

The Eucharist and the passion of Christ are related by association. One of the names Suso gives to the Eucharist is the “sacrament of love.” Like the passion it was a *sign* of God’s love toward humans. “For among all the signs of love, there is none that so overpowers all the lover’s mind as the beloved’s longed-for presence, which is put before everything else.”⁴⁵⁹ Just as the passion was an act of love that called for humans to love God in return, so also the Eucharistic sacrament called for a *response* from humans.⁴⁶⁰

Suso’s aim in this dialogue is to “stir up devotion”⁴⁶¹ and encourage an emotional engagement in the Eucharist.⁴⁶² We can see this already from the title of the chapter: “How Christ should be Devoutly Received in the Sacrament of the Eucharist”.⁴⁶³ In part this is achieved by explaining the presence, as we saw. However, unlike for instance the many expositions of the Mass, a genre that sought to explain the meaning of the various elements that the priest and the communicants performed during celebration,⁴⁶⁴ Suso’s dialogue is about the inner attitude of the communicant; also when he addresses the difficult subject of Christ’s entering into the host, he really addresses the individual as a moral being that should relate to this event personally.

From one point of view, the encouragement to devotion (*devotio*, *fervor*) and longing for the present Christ and the fruits that this presence gives is the task that Suso sets for himself as ‘reformer’ of spiritual life.⁴⁶⁵ True devotion, the main tenet of spirituality, is threatened by indifference and a religiosity of *habit*. Laxity of religiosity, in this case formulated as to receive out of habit, is surely a key point when Suso tries to “stir up devotion.” As is seen so often in the *Horologium*,

⁴⁵⁹ *Watch* 266; *Hor.* 548.21-23 *Nam inter omnia amoris indicia nihil est, quod adeo totum sibi rapiat animum diligentis sicut dilecti desiderata praesentia, quae ceteris omnibus antefertur.*

⁴⁶⁰ Mossman (2010) comments on developments in later medieval theology and piety that connected the Eucharist more closely to the passion than before.

⁴⁶¹ *Watch* 267; *Hor.* 549.22-23.

⁴⁶² *Watch* 276 “Let yourself be drawn by the devotion of the moment, rather than by lazy habit”; *Hor.* 557.24-25 *Itemque actualis devotio te potius trahat quam indulta consuetudo.*

⁴⁶³ *Watch* 266; *Hor.* 548.1-2 *Qualiter Christus in sacramento eucharistiae sit devote recipiendus.*

⁴⁶⁴ See Rubin (1991/2002), pp. 52-53; Cf. for instance Berthold von Regensburg, the popular Franciscan preacher of the thirteenth century, in his sermon *Von der messe*.

⁴⁶⁵ See Kurt Ruh (1996), pp. 443-44.

the disciple plays the role of someone whose spiritual fervor has been lacking; the dialogue stages a process of learning where his spirituality is awakened by the teaching of Eternal Wisdom. As to the Sacrament, the Disciple laments that the necessary intensity and ‘presence of spirit’ had been gone in him, and that he had not realized the actual presence of Christ in the host. “The body was there, but the mind was elsewhere,” he says, looking back on his own previous behavior.⁴⁶⁶ The Disciple, we saw above, wanted to know about the real presence, because this knowledge would give him “much reason” to love more fervently. In this, we find that devotion and love (the terms are used interchangeably), is the central part, but also, importantly, that it is not easy to engage these emotions. To love God in return was apparently a difficult matter. The Disciple needs a *reason* to love.

Suso’s text shows that even with the best of intention and preparations, it could still be difficult to engage emotionally in the sacrament. As we have observed in the previous chapter, Suso is concerned with the problems of *duritia*, “hardness of heart,” and feelings of spiritual deficiency or insufficiency. Such problems of devotional weakness appear to be acute in relation to the Eucharistic sacrament.

Why was devotion and love so difficult? In an essay that discusses some key lines of theological thought from early to the later Middle Ages, Berndt Hamm points to a development from *love* as a main category in the Middle Ages to *faith* in the reformation era.⁴⁶⁷ Even if the latter part of this essay, the famous radical alternative of Martin Luther, goes far beyond the scope of our study of Suso. Still this essay may help us to see more clearly the issue at stake also in Suso’s text.

In the high medieval period, Hamm shows, there occurred what we might call a ‘rediscovery of love’; in theology, but also in the new and refined moral culture of the courtly life, there is a whole new emphasis on love, both ‘worldly’ and ‘religious’ love. The most famous spiritual authority of that period, Bernard of Clairvaux, articulated the pure love of God as the high point of a gradualism that was developed in one of his primary works, *De diligendo deo*, “On Loving

⁴⁶⁶ In the *Bdew* Suso expresses this in rhyme: *Der lip stünt da, aber daz herze waz anders-wa. Bdew* 298.10-11; “My body stood there but my heart was elsewhere,” *Exemplar* 282.

⁴⁶⁷ For the following paragraphs, see Hamm (2010a), pp. 1-24.

God". Hamm's main point with this outline of ideas of love in the time of Bernard and Abelard⁴⁶⁸ is to show that love of God was seen as something that acted on the human soul from *outside*: it was the force of the Holy Spirit that made us love God (Peter Lombard). Thus humans who achieved a pure love were 'propelled' to great heights, as expounded in Bernard's monumental collection of sermons on the *Song of Songs*, where the soul and Christ are in a lovers' embrace. Whereas such sources set the standard for the rest of the Middle Ages, the following periods nonetheless came to look differently on divine love as a chief category. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries theologians begin to speak increasingly about human's own abilities—or lack thereof—to love God. From being an infused virtue by the Holy Spirit, love was increasingly seen as a created, inner virtue. Love of God, then begun to rely increasingly on the inner capability of human beings and a new qualitative concept of love as inner created force of the soul came to dominate. Hamm observes that a typical question posed by theologians of the later Middle Ages was "what can humans do on their own?" That is, to what degree of love of God and regret of sin are humans capable, without God's help? Some held an 'extreme' optimistic view and thought that humans were capable of loving God perfectly by their own means; others claimed, oppositely, that humans were only capable of a weak form of regret out of fear of retribution.⁴⁶⁹ The most common idea was that humans needed an 'input' of God's grace in order to love Him perfectly and feel a full regret of their sins, and that they had to *prepare* for this grace by investing some emotional efforts of their own. Thus we see a major shift toward a new attention on, an interest in, the human as moral being in the world. We also see the contours of a redefined 'model of cooperation', where humans do something to prepare and God does something in return. Within this paradigm, there were of course numerous positions and possible solutions. The primary development, however, should be clear: in the final period of the Middle

⁴⁶⁸ These two figures are usually regarded as opposites and even enemies. Both theologians nonetheless attest to a new emphasis on love in high medieval religiosity. Hamm, (2010a), p. 6: "Reflektiert Bernhard als monastischer Theologe über die Erfahrung der Liebe, so Abelard als theologischer Dialektiker über die Logik der Liebe."

⁴⁶⁹ This outlines the positions of nominalists and Augustinians respectively. See Hamm (2010a), p. 9.

Ages, love was about to become an inner quality of the soul. It was a power that had to be mobilized in the various situations of religious life. Whereas ‘older’ ideals of divine love still were praised and set the standard for piety (Bernard was the ‘master of spirituality’ throughout the medieval period) new ways of thinking about humans, their inner dispositions, and their standing before God had made such ideals challenging to live up to. This problem of love and inward affection in religious life is reflected memorably in the first scene of Suso’s *Buchlein der ewigen weisheit* where a friar is standing before a crucifix and feels *unable* to meditate on the passion with inward sincerity.⁴⁷⁰

Let us return to Suso and his ideas on the Eucharist and the problem of devotion. In one of the praises of the sacrament in the beginning of the dialogue, we read the following:

For just as dry wood provides good material for making earthly fire, and makes its flames mount on high and shoot out in every direction, so truly this sacrament, kindling the heat of the spirit, offers and promotes our great nourishment by feeding the fire of divine love when it is devoutly received.⁴⁷¹

We see that a ‘bernardian’ ideal of a high and pure love of God is at play. However, in order for this love to grow and “mount on high,” the sacrament must be *devoutly* received. At one point in the text, the disciple exclaims his innermost desire:

... would that all my skills and all my might and all my inwardness could be set free for your praises, that I might be able, with what ability I possess, to respond to your love.⁴⁷²

The requirement of devotion is paramount; but it puts stress on humans to stretch their inner abilities to the utmost. At another point in the dialogue, the Disciple

⁴⁷⁰ *Exemplar* 207; *Bdew* 196.2-3.

⁴⁷¹ *Watch* 266; *Hor.* 548.17-21 *Nam sicut arida ligna materiam idoneam praestant igni materiali et flammis eius faciunt in altum succrescere et se diffundere circumquaque, sic revera hoc sacramentum, caloris spiritualis incentivum, igni divini amoris immensum praestat fomentum, et ipsum fovet, devote susceptum.*

⁴⁷² *Watch* 273; *Hor.* 554.21-23 *Atque ideo utinam omnes artus mei et tota virtus mea et omnia interiora mea in laudem tuam resolverentur, ut amoris tuo pro posse meo respondere possem.*

identifies himself as someone who struggles to mobilize devotion; he speaks in plural “We who have little or no devotion.”

In response to this problem, Suso engages a variety of solutions. Most importantly for us at this point is to observe that one way around this problem for Suso is to turn from devotion to an even more fundamental aspect of piety, namely *faith*. The disciple speaks of a hardness of heart and lack of devotion, and that the love that the sacrament is said to kindle is not felt. He speaks of those who “remain hard at heart and cold in love,” even if they have done what is required, recited their psalms and so on. Eternal Wisdom responds to this:

Do not let this break you, and do not for reason of this make any noticeable withdrawal from this saving sacrament, but know that very often God’s love makes the souls safe in ways most secret and most trustworthy, when the soul relies solely on the support of faith, not propped up by any spiritual sweetness, not helped less than if it were abounding in the riches of spiritual charismata⁴⁷³

When devotion is lacking, he points to a basis of faith. Devotion had to rely on a solid and pure foundation; if it was absent, then it was necessary to be able to fall back on something that was secure in order to gain spiritually from the Eucharistic sacrament. This foundation was faith.⁴⁷⁴

Suso relies on faith to counteract the difficulties of devotion. We may speak of an attention toward faith as a ‘minimum requirement.’⁴⁷⁵ If devotion is lacking, an act of faith in the real presence—together with the formal requirement of confession—is explicitly held as sufficient for salvation. “God’s love makes the souls safe (...) when the soul relies solely on the support of faith.”

Speaking of the actual ritual process, Eternal Wisdom instructs the reader to approach and bow to the altar: “look on the sacred Body and Blood of your God

⁴⁷³ *Watch* 289; *Hor.* 569.28-570.3 *sciens quod divina pietas salutem animae saepius secretissime et fidelissime operatur, cum solo fidei subsidio anima innitur nec aliqua dulcedine spirituali fulcitur, non minus quam si prosperitate spiritualium charismatum afflueret.*

⁴⁷⁴ For more on the importance of Augustine’s sign theory, and the ‘epistemology of faith’ in combination with the unique concept of Eucharistic presence in medieval theology, see Aris (2007).

⁴⁷⁵ The term derives from Grosse (1994), and is used by Hamm (2004).

(...) with the eyes of faith.” The first part of this formulation is from the Dominican Breviary.⁴⁷⁶ The second part (*fidei oculis*) is added by Suso.

...with utter certainty and with no hesitation (*certissime et sine omni haesitatione*) “you may believe with all your heart and confess with your lips” [Rom 10.10] that that consecrated host is the true Son of God, born of the Virgin, who died and rose again⁴⁷⁷

In several passages in this part of the dialogue Eternal Wisdom/Christ stresses that faith is *certain*.

Most certainly and truly and without any doubting, I am contained in this sacrament, God and man, with my body and my soul, my flesh and my blood, just as I came out of my mother’s womb and hung upon the cross and sit at my Father’s right hand.⁴⁷⁸

In medieval theological thought from the time of Augustine, “certainty of faith” (*certitudo fidei*) was asserted in relation to the objective truths of faith, the revealed truths of Christianity.⁴⁷⁹ In this excerpt, the certainty of the real presence is linked to the truths of incarnation and redemption and resurrection.⁴⁸⁰ Suso underlines that the astonishing presence of Christ in the sacrament is within this category; it is simply a matter of faith and this faith is certain (*certissime et sine omni haesitatione*).⁴⁸¹ It is linked to other truths of faith, such as God’s creation.

...if nature can work in such marvelous ways, why cannot the power of nature’s Creator stretch out to work far greater marvels? So, if it is seen to be possible that

⁴⁷⁶ See Künzle’s notes (1977), p. 556.

⁴⁷⁷ *Watch* 275; *Hor.* 556.16 *certissime et sine omni haesitatione toto 'corde credas et ore confietaris,'* [Rom 10.10] *quo dilla hostia ceonsecrata sit verus Dei Filius ex virgine natus, qui mortuus est et resurrexit...*

⁴⁷⁸ *Watch* 266; *Hor.* 549.7-9 *Certissime et veraciter et absque omni dubitatione in hoc sacramento contineor, Deus et homo cum corpore et anima, carne et sanguine, sicut cum prodii ex utero atris et in cruce pependi ac sedeo ad dexteram Patris.*

⁴⁷⁹ See Schrimm-Heins (1992) on the history of the concepts *certitudo* and *securitas* in medieval theological tradition.

⁴⁸⁰ See similar connections in Thomas Aquinas’ liturgy for the *Corpus Christi* feast, cited in Rubin (1991/2002), pp. 185-9.

⁴⁸¹ In the *Horologium* version of this chapter, the concentration on faith generally is stronger than in the *Bdew*. This is especially seen in the *Horologium*’s emphasis on faith and certainty.

the Creator of the universe spoke, and that “all things were made” from nothing, why does this transmutation seem so impossible?⁴⁸²

The ideal form of devotion, one that makes “the flames mount on high” from encountering Christ in the sacrament, requires an inner concentration toward a secure and pure foundation. That is faith in the certain fact that Christ is present in the sacramental host, “not figuratively, but really, not in intention but bodily”. In addition, if there is no faith, there is no foundation upon which to build devotion and love to the sacrament. However, we see that there is beyond this assertion of faith as a basis for devotion, also a notable *concentration* on faith in itself in his dialogue, and that this concentration serves as response to two main disturbances to a fruitful Eucharist devotion.

Faith, Against Science

Suso attests to the basic epistemology that governed medieval sign theory in relation to the Eucharist.⁴⁸³ The unique presence in the sacramental host required an act of faith in humans, and this act was beneficial far beyond any assertion of natural truths. This act of faith, however, had to be pure and free from disturbances. Suso underlines that it is necessary for the spirit to be “free from (...) poisonous bewilderments,”⁴⁸⁴ in order to be incurred by the full effect of the Sacrament.

The Disciple finds it hard to understand the concept of Christ’s presence in the sacrament and asks Wisdom for “plainer signs and more evident proofs.”⁴⁸⁵ From this, Suso outlines some of the principal disturbances to Eucharist devotion.

⁴⁸² *Watch* 268; *Hor* 550.4-8 ... *si natura potest tot miranda in sua operatione, quare virtus auctoris naturae non se extendat ad longe maiora in sua operatione? Item, si possibile videtur, quod conditor orbis dixit et facta sunt universa ex nihilo, quare tam impossibilis videtur haec transmutatio?*

⁴⁸³ See Aris (2007), p. 184.

⁴⁸⁴ *Watch* 271; *Hor*. 552.29-30. A similar formulation is seen in Suso’s dialogue on the benefit of death preparation; See *Watch* 250 “... shun all the poisons and hindrances to your eternal salvation”; *Hor*. 533.34.-534.1 *cuncta quoque noxia a salute aeterna te retrahentia ac impediencia proicias*. See the next chapter in this study.

⁴⁸⁵ *Watch* 283; *Hor*. 564. 13-14 *Nonne melius esset, ut evidentioribus indiciis et manifestioribus experimentis fidem tantorum instaurasses mysteriorum?*

We may discern some different types of impediment. First, this may relate to the temptation to pursue the concepts of Eucharist thought scientifically, which, for Suso, is a sign of the *vana curiositas* that he often warns against. Second, evidence of the presence can mean ‘proof’ of the senses, that is to say, experiences either in the form of *visions* of Christ’s presence or in the sense of an inner-felt presence. These are two chief disturbances to Eucharist piety, and we shall briefly comment on both.

Fruitful reception requires devotion and humans must love God, to be sure; however, on a more basic level they must *recognize* what it is they receive in the sacrament.⁴⁸⁶ The Disciple complains that “...few use diligence to ponder (*ponderare*) the most precious power and profit.”⁴⁸⁷ A certain degree awareness of “who it is that they may receive” is crucial as it is this awareness to which faith relates. Faith, after all, is an act of cognition.⁴⁸⁸ Awareness of the real presence of Chris in the host also causes *humility*, which is another important aspect of the proper attitude of preparedness. However, Suso warns loudly against a tendency to *scrutinize* the truths of the sacrament. It might seem to be a fine line between “pondering” (*ponderare*) the truths of faith and “scrutinizing” them, but for Suso this difference is substantial.

No tongue has the power to explain how my body may be contained in the sacrament, no sense can perceive it, no human reason can apprehend it, but only faith is equal to knowing it. For this is an operation only of the divine power, and it is immense; and you must therefore believe it faithfully, and beware of presumptuous investigation.”⁴⁸⁹

In such statements in the dialogue, there is often a clear reference to the way theology is carried out among Suso’s contemporaries. “Presumptuous investigation” means to approach the matters of the Eucharist not in faith, but by way of

⁴⁸⁶ See Aris (2007), pp. 185-86.

⁴⁸⁷ *Watch* 285; *Hor.* 565.19-21 *O quam pauci sunt in hoc mundo, qui diligenti sollicitudine current ponderare sacramenti huius pretiosissimam virtutem et utilitatem.*

⁴⁸⁸ See Hamm (2010a), p. 67.

⁴⁸⁹ *Watch* 267; *Hor.* 549.17-21 *Qualiter corpus meum in sacramento contineatur nulla lingua valet explicare, neque sensus aliquis percipere, nec ratio humana valet hoc apprehendere, sed sola fide convenit hoc scire. Hoc enim solius divinae virtutis operatio est immensa; et ideo fideliter hoc tibi credendum est, et cavendum a praesumptuosa perscrutatione.*

scientific methods. The voice of eternal Wisdom in Suso's dialogue often reflects how contemporary scientific approaches to Eucharist theory could be perceived by theologians as both irrelevant and unfruitful to sincere devotional life. We find in this a selective use of scholastic concepts and simplification of them; also, a sharp warning against *vana curiositas* and a profound skepticism towards philosophically-oriented theology.⁴⁹⁰ As was seen in our study of the idea of *tribulatio* / *adversitas*, the true piety of the 'school of virtue' is contrasted to the scientific pursuit that occurs in the schools. Similarly, the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is a matter that is not to be scientifically pursued. It is something known only to God. For humans, it is a *mirabile*, a "wonder."⁴⁹¹ Eternal wisdom explains this by pointing to a "common example" of a boy born and raised in a prison "who would consider many facts someone wanted to tell him about the course of the stars and the disposition of the heavens as miraculous."⁴⁹²

The point is to stimulate an attitude of awe and respect and a reliance on faith, and to discharge any desire to scrutinize this by way of scientific investigation. The certainty of faith is contrasted to the certainties that are attained by way of scientific method:

⁴⁹⁰ Suso's criticism has been linked more specifically to the German Dominican school of theologians. See Imbach (1987). From our perspective, we can see that Suso's response and criticism of 'school theology' can be seen as part of his simplified program of Eucharist devotion. See *Horologium*'s chapter one, Book II; *Watch* 234-41; *Hor.* 519-26. See also Chapter One in this study. This effort of simplification is another point where Suso might be considered a pioneer of 'theology of piety'. The late 'medieval theologians of piety that are treated by Hamm, (1999), p. 12, saw scholastic thought as resources up to a certain extent, but they also subjected contemporary philosophical theology to ongoing criticism. Berndt Hamm in fact sees criticism of scholastic thought as a main tenet in late medieval *Frömmigkeitstheologie*, and specialized theories surrounding the Eucharist were a target of this criticism. "Die Kritik an Überflüssigem, Unnützem und Sterilem richtet sich in erster Linie gegen eine philosophische Behandlung theologischer fragen, wie si ein scholastischen Lehrbetrieb von allem auf die Gebiete der theologischen Wissenschafts- und Gotteslehre, aber z.B. auch auf Spezialprobleme der Christologie, Gnaden- und Eucharistielehre angewandt wurde." (1999), p. 14.

⁴⁹¹ See *Bdew* 292.6, 18-21, 24; 295, is not an uncommon term used on the presence of Christ, as Mossman has demonstrated, (2010), pp. 177-78, in discussion with Willing (2004).

⁴⁹² Eternal wisdom explains this by pointing to a "common example" of a boy born and raised in a prison "who would consider many facts someone wanted to tell him about the course of the stars and the disposition of the heavens as miraculous." The example is from Gregory the Great, *Dialogues* IV, ch. 1. Cf. Künzle (1977), p. 552.

How many truths do you reckon that nature's most profound investigators, the subtlest hunters after reasoning and the acutest adducers of syllogistic complexities, really enjoy possession of through scientific deduction? Very few indeed.⁴⁹³

This passage echoes the 'second class' in Suso's criticism of academic theology in II.1, the *opinium novitates mirabilis*. Faith puts human striving for natural knowledge in a light of ignorance:

An intellect that is seeking the impossible and wanting to scrutinize the inscrutable is stupid, trying to know about the wonderful works that are God's alone, and yet lacking knowledge of the workings of nature. What more do I need to know or find out? I know and I believe most firmly that you are the highest and the infinite power, who 'can do all things' ... who know and see all things, and the most simple and unchangeable truth, who cannot deceive or be deceived. And so you are the goal of my faith, the anchor of my hope, now and in eternity...⁴⁹⁴

The distinction between, on the one hand, recognizing and pondering this truth of faith, which is an act of belief and concentration in the service of Eucharist devotion, and, on the other hand, scrutinizing this 'fact' of Christ's presence, runs through the *Horologium sapientiae*. For a secure and basic attitude, a "beginning"

⁴⁹³ Watch 269; Hor. 551.23-27: *Quot putas hi, qui sunt naturae profundissimi scrutatores, ratiocinationum subtilissimi venatores et complexionum syllogisticarum acutissimi argumentatores, veritates scientificis deductionibus se habere in veritate gaudeant? Utique paucas.*

⁴⁹⁴ Watch 271; Hor. 522.31-523.7 ...*stultus est intellectus quaerens impossibilia et persecruti cupiens imperscrutabilia, qui opera Dei solius magnalia scire contendit et tamen in cognitione operationum naturae deficit. Quid amplius necesse est mihi scire vel investigare? Scio et firmissime credo, quia tu es summa et infinita potentia, quae 'omnia potes' [Wisd. 7.27] ... qui omnia scis et vides. Simplicissima et immutabilis veritas, quae mentiri et fallere non potes. Et ideo finis fidei meae, anchora spei meae tu es nunc et in aeternum.* See also Watch 270 "it was necessary for divine Wisdom to stoop to human ignorance, and to give all these matters, as exceeding human powers, to men for them to believe in, and the faithful, clinging to this as to infallible truth, are relying on a solid foundation, having greater certainty from that than if they were to rely on any intellectual understanding, their own or someone else's, of a thing that has been known and weighed up." Hor. 552.22-27 *Proinde necessario valde divina sapientia ignorantiae humanae condescendens, praedicta tamquam facultatem humanam excedentia hominibus tradidit credenda, cui tamquam veritati infallibili adhaerentes solido fideles innituntur fundamento, maiorem inde certitudinem habentes quam si intellectui cuicumque sive proprio vel alieno in re scita et proportionata inniterentur.*

of a good Eucharist devotion, the philosophically-oriented theology of the schools is of no use.⁴⁹⁵

The expression “Seeing with the eyes of faith,” contrasts the “defective vision of [man’s] intellectual eye.”⁴⁹⁶ Suso searches for a sapiential theology in the classic sense, a “heartfelt knowledge of divine things,” as directly opposed to theology in the sense of specialized theological reflection that approaches philosophy.⁴⁹⁷ In one of the passages about the real presence, he tries to turn philosophical theology ‘against itself’ when he points to Aristotle and gives an example of the limits of scientific pursuits: the ‘pagan philosopher’, who had “made the most learned enquiries about the number of the moving heavenly bodies” but had not found what he was seeking, had concluded by saying: “Let us leave these things to better minds.”⁴⁹⁸ Suso encourages his audience to leave aside enquiries about matters of faith. Eternal Wisdom simply refers to the Lord’s body being “present in some special way.”⁴⁹⁹ This is as far as Suso is willing to go. The presence in the Eucharist is set as the limit of enquiry and the beginning of faith.

Faith, Against Visions

The idea of a ‘special presence’ of Christ in the Eucharist, the emphasis on approaching the sacrament with the ‘eyes of faith’ serves another purpose in addition to the criticism against unfruitful scrutiny. Another disturbance to the pure faith that forms the basis of Eucharist devotion is the search for evidence in terms of *experiential* proof of Christ’s presence is, in fact, disturbing to faith. Faith is namely also delimited against an attitude of piety that relies too much on the

⁴⁹⁵ As has been said earlier, this should not be taken to mean the theology of ‘classic’ scholasticism, of Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure, who are held in high regard, but developments in early fourteenth century scholasticism.

⁴⁹⁶ *Watch* 270; *Hor.* 552.18-19 *licet homo haec videre non possit ex defectu potentiae visivae oculi intellectualis.*

⁴⁹⁷ Hamm (1999), p. 10.

⁴⁹⁸ *Watch* 269; *Hor.* 551.23. Suso makes use of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* 12, Ch. 8, see Künzle (1977), pp. 551.

⁴⁹⁹ *Watch* 270; *Hor.* 552.10-14 *Corpus namque dominicum non est eo modo in sacramento, sicut corpus in loco, quod suis dimensionibus loco comensuratur, sed est ibi quodam speciali modo.* Künzle (1977), p. 552, observes that also this derives from Thomas Aquinas; *STh* III, q. 75, a. 1, ad 3.

senses and on experiences. Although Suso is a proponent of an experiential, and to an extent, also a visionary piety, he is rather reluctant when it comes to Eucharistic visions in particular.

Sources that, on the other hand, exhibit a strongly visionary Eucharist piety are the Sister-Books from the southern German Dominican convents such as Töss, Oetenbach, or St. Katharinenthal. Suso, in fact, served as prior in St. Katherinenthal for a period, and it is well known that he was in close contact, even literary collaboration, with Elsbeth Stigel from Töss. A distinct visionary Eucharist piety can be seen in a number of *vitae* that these milieus produced.⁵⁰⁰ The Sister-Books continue a distinct tradition of female visionary piety related to the Eucharist. Caroline Bynum has shown that some types of Eucharist vision are almost exclusively found in *vitae* of female visionaries, such as visions of the Christ Child in the consecrated host.⁵⁰¹ Many of the female visionaries' biographers may carefully distinguish between the various ways of 'seeing,' in line with medieval theories on visions. Eucharist visions reported from female monastic environments have been considered by modern scholars as narrative illustrations of Eucharist doctrine designed for a special setting.⁵⁰² Nevertheless, visionary enthusiasm connected to the Eucharist was clearly disturbing to spiritual authorities. Skepticism to the possibility of seeing Christ in the host is a recurring tendency in later medieval theology.⁵⁰³

With Suso's Eucharist text, we may speak of a 'cultivation of mysticism' in the sense of an attempt to steer mystical and visionary enthusiasm within the boundaries of accepted piety, and, more importantly, to encourage a Eucharist

⁵⁰⁰ See for instance H. R. Gehring's study (1957).

⁵⁰¹ See Bunym (1991), esp. p. 123.

⁵⁰² Acklin-Zimmermann (1993) called attention to the theological implications of *vitae* from such monasteries, and particularly how they illustrate the theories of real presence and transubstantiation developed in the schools by means of visionary narrative.

⁵⁰³ John Tauler mentions a sister from Oberland who allegedly had seen wonderful things in the Eucharistic host with her *bodily eyes*. He refutes the possibility: "...*unser Herr ist nicht auf diese Weise verfahren*." Hoffman (1961), 31, p. 216. Skepticism to visions in relation to the Eucharistic sacrament were to become a main tenet in Eucharist theology in the following period, for instance in the writings of Marquard von Lindau, Jean Gerson and Heinrich von Langenstein. For these theologians visionary piety was seen to distort the inner purity and concentration, causing people to be absorbed in external forms. See Mossmann (2010), p. 210-31; Snoek (1995), pp. 372-73; Bynum (2007), pp. 86-90.

piety that does not demand visionary ‘abilities’ in the communicant.⁵⁰⁴ Suso uses the example of Simeon from the Gospel of Luke (2.25-32) as an example. For Simeon, in the temple, Christ was present with his body and soul. In this way he is also present for us in the Holy sacrament, Eternal Wisdom assert. The only difference between Simeon and us is that he could see Christ with his bodily eyes.⁵⁰⁵

For though it is true that he was visible to Simeon when he received him, but is invisible to you, still you have not received him any less truly. For as my bodily eye cannot now see your humanity present in the sacrament, neither could that man Simeon, carrying you in his arms, see your divinity, except with the eyes of faith, just as I see you present now. But why should I care about bodily vision, since those eyes are called blessed that see, not according to the flesh, as did the scribes and Pharisees, but spiritually, as the chosen disciples? ... most truly (*certissime*) and without any doubt you have him present to you in the sacrament, though it be invisibly.⁵⁰⁶

O, how fitting that the presence of this good should move me to love, and even though it be plainly not possible for him to be seen here in the sacrament as he is in his native land, still a fervent love based on a foundation of faith, should be so built upon God that the presence of this sacrament in the heart conquer every worldly love.⁵⁰⁷

The expression seeing “with the eyes of faith” (*oculi fidei*) is repeated in this part of the text.⁵⁰⁸ Another motive that is used to argue against Eucharistic visions is that of the Sacrament as mediation of rays of light. Rays from the godhead are *veiled* in the sacrament, and not plain for the physical eyes to see. Much emphasis is put

⁵⁰⁴ Cf. Hamm, (1999), on *Frömmigkeitstheologie* and the domestication of mystical piety.

⁵⁰⁵ *Watch* 273; *Hor.* 555.9-11.

⁵⁰⁶ *Watch* 273-4; *Hor.* 555.9-20 *Licet enim Simeon ipsum visibiliter suscepit, tu autem invisibiliter, non tamen minus veraciter ipsum suscepisti. Denique sicut oculus meus corporeus nunc in sacramento non potest videre tuam humanitatem praesentem, sic ned praedictus Simeon te 'in ulnis' portans videre poterat tuam divinitatem, nisi oculis fidei, sicut et ego nunc te praesentem video. Sed quid mihi de visu corporeo, cum 'beati' dicantur 'oculi,' non qui vident secundum carnem sicut 'scribae et pharisaei,' sed spiritualiter sicut electi discipuli? ... Certissime et absque omni dubitatione ipsum in sacramento habes praesentialiter, licet invisibiliter.*

⁵⁰⁷ *Watch* 273; *Hor.* 554.31-555.5 *O quam digne praesentia huius boni affectum debet movere. Et licet manifeste prout in patria hic videri in sacramento non possit, fervidus tamen affectus fidei fundamento innixus, in Deo tantum solidatus esse deberet, ut huius sacramenti praesentia in corde suo omnem terrenum affectum superaret. Bene itaque appellatur sacramentum hoc sacramentum amoris. Quid enim magis est amoris? Quid dilectionis, quam coniunctio dilecti cum dilecto familiaris?*

⁵⁰⁸ See also *Watch* 275; *Hor.* 556.17.

on the sacrament as a special kind of light that contrasts everything figural that the human eye can see.

The search for proof of the presence in the Sacrament is a mark of the Disciple's weak spirituality. Against this search for manifestations and confirmation, Wisdom refers, once again, to a basis of faith: "For indeed faith must be lacking where proof knows how to find room, and, consequently, the great merit of faith will be lost."⁵⁰⁹ Such expressions of faith and its merits show us an important strand in this text. Emphasizing how *God works in hidden ways*, Suso seeks a way around the problem of insufficiency and inability to mobilize love and devotion. Drawing attention to this basic level of piety, Suso wants to encourage a way of sacramental devotion that works for 'everyone,' including those who are weak in affection.⁵¹⁰

Faith is indeed 'only' the basis, the foundation upon which devotion is built, and the fruits or the effect of the sacrament (see below) are mainly associated with devotion. The degree of devotion is in correspondence with the effect. On occasion, however, Suso goes even 'lower' than that as he claims that humans are, in fact, brought to salvation by faith alone. That is to say, when human abilities fail altogether, and devotion is lacking, Suso turns to something *ad extra*.⁵¹¹ The far more radical and 'total' theology of justification by faith alone that gave birth to reformation was still miles ahead. Suso's thoughts on faith as the foundation of Eucharist piety is nonetheless an intriguing example of how the solutions to pressing issues of devotional life in late medieval theology can often have a 'proto-reformation' feel.

⁵⁰⁹ *Watch* 284; *Hor* 564.15-22.

⁵¹⁰ Cf. Hamm (2010a), p. 231.

⁵¹¹ However, it is characteristic that faith *in itself* is not shaped as a singular virtue, but qualitatively through love, through the ability to develop as love and ability to love. Cf. Hamm (2010a), p. 68.

Eucharist Preparation

As we approach Suso's formulations of an ideal Eucharist preparation, let us consider an important passage that can help us outline the profile of this Eucharist theology. According to Eternal wisdom, we read, there are three types of receivers:

There are three kinds of men who receive me sacramentally; some of them are wholly ill-disposed, such as those who are involved in crimes; there are some well-disposed, such as the perfect; and some are halfway between, such as those who are not devout.⁵¹²

Accordingly, there are three kinds of 'result':

The first deserve death in eternity and cursing on this earth; the second deserve eternal life and spiritual blessing; the third are eating dry bread and tasteless food, and not perceiving the sweetness of the sacrament.⁵¹³

This threefold scheme is firmly stated in both versions of the text, and Suso builds much of his treatise around these three categories. First, we observe that from what we have seen above concerning devotion as necessary prerequisite for fruitful communion, this scheme makes Suso's Eucharist theology appear rather exclusive. Does Suso mean that only the *perfecti* achieve fruits from the sacrament? Was it not also stated that God makes safe souls that rely solely on faith? As we shall see below, Suso has his reasons for holding the middle category as un-devout, and thus seemingly without fruits from participating in the Eucharist.

Confession as Preparation

Suso's threefold scheme points to the "wholly ill-disposed" (*omnio indispositi*), those who are well-disposed (*bene dispositi*), and those who are "halfway between" (*indevoti*). With regard to confession as Eucharist preparation it is im-

⁵¹² Watch 286-87; Hor. 566.5-8 *Tria sunt genera hominum sacramentaliter me recipientium: quidam sunt omnino indispositi sicut illi, qui sunt criminalibus involuti; quidam bene dispositi sicut perfecti; quidam medio modo se habent sicut indevoti.*

⁵¹³ Watch 286; Hor. 566.8-11 *Primi merentur aeternam mortem et temporalem maledictionem; secundi vitam aeternam et spiritualem benedictionem; tertii panem artum et cibum insipidum comedentes eius non percipiunt suavitatem.*

portant to note that a line is drawn between the ‘outside’ category, “the wholly ill-disposed”, and the two other categories, the middle category and “the well disposed”. The ill-disposed fall outside the category of worthy recipients as they have not made confession and are in a state of mortal sin.

An established practice in the late Middle Ages was that sacramental penance had to be made before one could receive the sacrament. For most theologians confession was in some sense a minimal requirement for a worthy communion. Having confessed one’s sins and thus approaching the sacrament in a relative state of purity, was necessary in order count among the worthy recipients.

Formal confession makes an absolute distinction, and sacramental reception without confession of mortal sins was perceived as “Judas communion”: causing eternal damnation upon oneself, a common medieval thought that has its biblical foundation in 1. Corinthians. We shall return to this below when we discuss the problem of fear of the sacrament.

Suso’s three categories of receivers can help us see the role of confession in his Eucharist thought (and practice). Sacramental penance makes an absolute distinction between the ‘outside category’ of the unprepared, who eat themselves to judgment, and the rest, who are generally considered within a gradual scheme of devotion and corresponding grace. The main concern lies with the two categories, the *indevoli* and the *bene dispositi*. For the most part, he leaves out the category of the “Wholly ill disposed.” This relatively simple scheme is repeated in a discussion at the end of the dialogue: the Disciple asks what happens if a communicant discovers in him a forgotten sin just before communicating, and then makes a last minute confession.

If he is truly contrite, and makes use of the counsel of physicians of the spirit, then, strictly speaking, he is not a sinner. When Mary Magdalen with contrite heart fell at the Lord’s feet and washed them with her tears, she had indeed a sinner’s reputation, yet she was no longer a sinner, because Christ had forgiven her sins.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹⁴ *Watch* 286; *Hor.* 566.16-20 *Si vere conteritur et consilio spiritualium utitur medicorum, iam proprie loquendo peccator non est. Maria Magdalena dum corde compuncta ad pedes domini accessit et lacrimis eos rigavit, nomen quidem peccatricis habuit, peccatrix tamen amplius non fuit, quia ei Christus peccata dimisit.*

Formally speaking, (*proprie loquendo*), those who confess their sins by making use of the “counsel of the physicians,” are no longer in sin, and thus no longer in the ‘outside category’ of the unworthy. As we have seen, the main theme in this first part, and as also the title of the chapter states, the devout reception is what matters to Suso. He is not really concerned with the category of the wholly ill-disposed. These have un-confessed mortal sins and are thus formally outside the realm of receivers, but can confess their sins and are thus formally in a state that enables them to make a beginning.

Suso thus keeps with traditional teaching on the Eucharist as being reserved for those who are prepared through confession. In a ‘formal’ sense, sacramental confession is necessary preparation for communion. Formal confession, however, is only the beginning. It is only a first step toward a *fruitful* communion. Not surprisingly, the idea of preparation also entails asceticism and withdrawal from the world:

...if you want to experience the sweetness you have never known from this sacrament, take care first to withdraw your soul “from secular business,” from vices and carnal matters, so that your receiving of it may be preceded by profound contrition and full confession. And so let yourself be drawn by devotion rather than by lazy habit. Adorn the little hospice of your heart with most ardent affections and most holy meditations for him, as if with blushing roses and pailing lilies, and prepare a bridal couch for such a bridegroom with true peace of heart.⁵¹⁵

Other formulations concerning penitence as preparation are less formal and practical.

The soul that wants to experience me within, in the secret hermitage of a detached life, and wants to taste of my sweetness must first be cleansed of defects and be adorned with virtues...

⁵¹⁵ Watch 276; Hor. 557.21-28 *Demum si sacramenti huius saporem tibi inexpertum experiri desideras, cura animam tuam prius abstrahere a 'negotiis saecularibus,' [2 Tim 2.4.] a vitiis et carnalitatibus, it eius sumptionem praecedat profunda contritio et pura confessio. Itemque actualis devotio te potius trahat quam indulta consuetudo. Ardentissimis affectionibus et sanctissimis meditationibus tamquam rosis rubescentibus et liliis albescentibus hospitium cordis tui ei adorna et thalamum tanto sponso per veram cordis pacem praepara.*

Suso's Eucharist teaching works on different levels. This part suggests a purer form of reception, that of the spiritually advanced (*perfecti*). He speaks both to the spiritually advanced, the third category of recipients (or at least those who have the potential of reaching this stage), to the 'weak' who are struggling to engage emotionally, as well as to those who expect to see the host or who rely too much on experiences.

Self-Abasement: Preparedness as Attitude

Throughout the chapter, the sinfulness of the receiver is a principal subject of reflection: a basic tenet of Suso's treatment of the Sacrament and Christ's presence is the overwhelming *difference*, between the immense divine and majestic presence and the lowly sinfulness of the receiver.

Confession means not only to use the counsel of the physicians, that is, the sacrament of penance as preparation. It can also suggest a more fundamental 'penitential habitus' of sorrow of sins and an ongoing inner confession. Such an attitude is exemplified though the Disciple's long monologue, where he complains about his former life of "weak" religiosity without true recognition of God's presence and *pietas*.⁵¹⁶ "I lament to you with the deepest sorrow of my heart,"⁵¹⁷ the Disciple says, meaning his previous state of insensitivity, before he realized the amazing presence and began to feel devotion to it. The main character's confession and spiritual awakening is portrayed as a kind of *conversion*, into a life of penance. The *tears* and sorrow over previous sins are standard elements of a *penitential attitude*, a monastic trend that goes far back through the centuries, but was formulated most famously and influentially by Gregory the Great as to "acknowledge sin even where there is no sin" (*Bonarum mentium est ibi culpam agnoscere, ubi culpa non est*).⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁶ *Watch* 277-81; *Hor.* 558-561.

⁵¹⁷ *Watch* 277; *Hor.* 558.29 *O mi Deus, tibi conqueror cum intimo gemitu cordis mei....*

⁵¹⁸ See Schwarz (1968), pp. 59-82, esp. pp. 62-63. *Epist.* XI, 64 (*PL* 77.1195b); cf. Hamm (2010a), p. 71.

Sven Grosse has given attention to late medieval theologians' revival of this claim, especially in a mystical setting.⁵¹⁹ With Jean Gerson as his main source, Grosse speaks of a higher degree of guilt consciousness; a total guilt, which corresponds to an intensified view on human existence as one of sin, quite simply. This means a shift away from the traditional penitential theology that emphasized factual individual guilt, onto a view on total guilt; true piety becomes a gesture of humility.⁵²⁰ Penance is a *virtue*.⁵²¹

Most importantly to us, this attitude of penitence entails a view that parallels the formal preparation through confession; with Grosse we might say that this is a guilt consciousness of a higher degree. The ancient monastic theme of self-humbling is intensified, and also appropriated to a larger audience.⁵²² The idea of a 'total penitential attitude' is poignantly expressed in one of Wisdom's instructional passages early in the chapter:

Putting on the confession of your heart and lips like a garment ... be filled with humble devotion and wonder that so great a lord deigns to come to so poor a servant, such nobility to a wretched little worm, so much majesty to a vile leper, and say with fear and respect: "Lord, I am not worthy"

From a perspective of an 'absolute guilt' characteristic to much late medieval thought including Suso, preparation for the sacrament does not only mean sacramental confession, but also an act of self humbling.⁵²³

In this perspective of 'total guilt,' there is in fact not such a thing as true worthiness before the sacrament. Although, *proprie loquendo*, the sacrament of penance makes communicants worthy to receive, there is, to stay with Grosse, an 'unworthiness of a higher degree', which is not removed by the penitential sacra-

⁵¹⁹ Grosse (1994).

⁵²⁰ Cf. Grosse (1994), p. 54.

⁵²¹ See Oberman (1983), p. 155. The penitential attitude as seen in Suso is also manifested through exemplary gestures in a more 'concrete' sense. See *Watch* 280-81 "But now, with my hands stretched out as it were upon the cross, and my eyes lifted up towards heaven, I ask pardon for what i have left undone." *Hor.* 561.18-20 *Sed nunc expansis in modum crucis manibus et erectis in caelum luminibus precor veniam de omissis.*

⁵²² See Bernstein (2000), pp. 183-84.

⁵²³ *Watch* 290; *Hor.* 570.22 ...*accedere cum vera humilitate et imperfectionis ... recognitione.* The scriptural basis in the passages that emphasize this self humbling is above all Jb 25,6; Ps 22,6; Is 41,14.

ment, but remains, and *shall* remain as it bespeaks the ideal attitude to the sacrament of Love. When the question of worthiness is addressed at the end of the dialogue, Eternal Wisdom asserts that

There has not risen among men born of women” (Mt 11.11) anyone who out of his own power and the justice of his works could prepare himself sufficiently to receive me with true worthiness, even if there were one man with the natural purity of all the angels ...⁵²⁴

The same idea is repeated just after this quote: not among “men of great deeds”.⁵²⁵ A decisive trend in later medieval theology is an emphasis on the insufficiency of human works in terms of justification.⁵²⁶ This call to take on a ‘total’ penitential attitude and to approach the host in this state of absolute self abasement shows that the sacrament is a point of encounter between two opposites: the needy sinful human and the majestic God.

Modes and Frequency

Spiritualiter and sacramentaliter

In the last section of Suso’s dialogue on the Eucharist the question of *modes* of receiving is addressed. The Servant asks Eternal Wisdom about the difference between *spiritual* and *sacramental* reception, that is between a “communion of desire,” taking place on an inner level, without the presence of the Host, and the normal sacramental situation and distribution by the priest.⁵²⁷

In Eternal Wisdom’s response to this question of modes, we learn that:

There are those who receive me sacramentally at this table and still go away fasting, and there are those who are cheated of this table and are still filled to the full

⁵²⁴ Watch 286-7; Hor. 567.4-7 *Inter natos mulierum non surrexit qui ex sola virtute et iustitia operum suorum tamquam ex condigno se sufficienter praeparare possit, etiam si unus homo haberet naturalem omnium angelorum puritatem ...*

⁵²⁵ 2. Kgs 23.20, Watch 287; Hor. 567.14.

⁵²⁶ See Zumkeller (1959), pp. 265-305.

⁵²⁷ See Grosse (1994), pp. 212-14; Schlette (1960), pp. 12-24; See also Macy (1999).

of its plenty. For those men perceive the sacrament alone, these however, the sacrament and its power.⁵²⁸

We observe that it is possible to eat sacramentally but without devotion and receive no effect (“go away fasting”), and oppositely, to eat spiritually, and get the full effect. This is not an unusual opinion.⁵²⁹ With this remark on spiritual ‘communion of desire,’ *manducatio in voto*,⁵³⁰ we encounter an important and interesting aspect of the devotional culture surrounding the Eucharist in the Middle Ages: the possibility of *spiritual communion*, of receiving the sacrament through an inner act of will and imagination, without actually receiving the species.⁵³¹ This was an accepted form of communion since the early Middle Ages.⁵³² This practice had most likely begun as a solution to cases of illness where there was a danger of regurgitation. This option of spiritual communion developed, particularly in religious circles that cherished an interiorized piety, into a form of communion that was detached from the Host situation. With the emphasis on spiritual communion among some mystics we find, parallel with the intensification of the inner, immediate approach to God, a certain ‘desacralization’.⁵³³ Spiritual communion had the ‘advantage’ of immediacy and personal union, without any interference of the priest. It was an important aspect of Eucharist piety in female monastic groups, and is often reported in the so-called Sister-books. Several scholars have inter-

⁵²⁸ *Watch* 291; *Hor.* 571.11-14 *Sunt, qui me in hac mensa sacramentaliter recipiunt et tamen ieiuni recedunt. Et sunt, qui hac mensa fraudantur et tamen de plenitudine eius copiosissime inebriantur. Nam illi quidem solum sacramentum, isti autem sacramentum et eius virtutem percipiunt.*

⁵²⁹ Schlette (1960).

⁵³⁰ The difference is, of course, that “Begindekommunion”, communion *sacramentaliter in voto* is based on inner desire and devotion, whereas a communion carried through merely in habit, is insufficient, in Suso’s view.

⁵³¹ For summary, see Mossman (2010), p. 157. For theological basis of this type of sacramental reception, see Schlette (1960); and Browe. Browe thinks that this phenomenon developed partly from particular situations of illness, where there was a risk of the host being regurgitated by the sick. Thus the host was placed on the heart or on the head of the communicant, making it possible to receive at a certain distance. The Sister-books are full of accounts of spiritual communion and visions related to this phenomenon, even of sisters who receive communion spiritually, or imaginatively, from Christ himself. See comments on female visionaries and the eucharist in Bynum (1991), sep pp. 122-24.

⁵³² For the general understanding of modes from Lombard to Aquinas, see Willing (2004), p. 155; Schlette (1960), pp. 16-24.

⁵³³ See Grosse (1994), pp. 212-13; See also Rubin (1991/2002), p. 316.

puted the prevalence of such experiences in female environment from a gender perspective, that is, as a predominantly female type of immediacy that stands in a relative independence to priestly, that is, *male*, distribution of grace via the sacramental institution.⁵³⁴ This same may be said for the typical female “genre” Christ child visions, which, from a perspective of religious experience, are closely related to a mystical interpretation of spiritual communion. Spiritual communion was a way to receive the Eucharist when people were hindered from receiving sacramentally for some reason, but for some it could simply be a way to often receive the sacrament.

Suso mentions that this is a good way of receiving for those who are kept away (*fraudentur*) from the sacrament. It is not evident what exactly Suso means by this, but it surely suggests some kind of circumstance that hinders people to receive as often as they desire.⁵³⁵

The idea of spiritual communion as a fully worthy communion rested doctrinally on the well-known assertion of Augustine: *crede et manducasti*, “believe and you have already eaten,” which is cited also in Suso’s dialogue.⁵³⁶ This Augustinian idea served as argument for the full worthiness of spiritual communion.⁵³⁷ Suso, as we see, holds that spiritual communion is indeed an option, and that it is far more beneficial than an *undevout* sacramental communion. That is to say, spiritual communion is better than sacramental reception out of habit. However, we also see from the next answer in the dialogue that it is best to receive in *both ways*. On closer look we see that it is the Disciple who quotes Augustine’s *crede et manducasti*, and he suggests that this was a source of confusion as to

⁵³⁴ See Hamm (2009), p. 48; Bynum (1991), chapter IV, especially pp. 134-36.

⁵³⁵ *Fraudentur* does seem to refer to some type of restriction of which Suso is not in favor; it suggests an ‘illegitimate’ hindrance. It *might* be a reference to the interdict that was laid down on the Empire in the early fourteenth century resulting from the conflict between Lewis of Bavaria and Pope John XXII. This interdict caused restrictions on sacramental distribution, and was perceived as a crisis by many. Although the Dominicans sided with the Pope in his conflict (and Suso castigates Lewis the Bavarian with his vision of the Ram in HS II.1), we might still assume the sacramental restrictions were seen as a severe crisis by spiritual reformers of his kind. Concerning this, see Leuschner (1980), pp 107-15; Tyler (1999) Ch II (on Constance in particular); Bihlmeyer (1907/1961) pp 96-8.

⁵³⁶ *Watch* 291; *Hor.* 571.18-19. Angenendt (2005), p. 241.

⁵³⁷ Angenendt (2005), p. 241.

which ‘mode’ was best.⁵³⁸ As the Disciple raises this issue, his question is met by a clear prevalence to full sacramental communion.⁵³⁹ The one who receives in both ways, that is, sacramentally and spiritually, has “more reason for devotion and thankfulness.” Suso gives primacy to *spiritualiter et sacramentaliter* on the grounds that he who receives in both ways “will have the giver at the same time as the gift, the cause with the effect.”⁵⁴⁰ The identity of the giver and the gift in the Eucharist is another tenet of traditional Eucharist theology here used by Suso.

Again, in line with Thomas Aquinas, Suso holds that sacramental reception produces far more grace (*major grata*), than ‘mere’ spiritual communion.⁵⁴¹ It is also worth noting that this is another concept developed and expanded in the *Horologium* compared to the original source *Bdew*.⁵⁴²

Again, we might speak of a sacramental view.⁵⁴³ Unlike many of the best known mystics, Suso gives prevalence to sacramental over spiritual communion, or to be more accurate, he recommends sacramental *and* spiritual communion, that is, full, devout, sacramental reception. In fact, he has very little to say about spiritual communion, and seems to reserve this opportunity for special cases where people are “cheated from the table” (*fraudentur*)—whatever that means. Contrary to John Tauler, for instance, who holds that for the mystically advanced, the *perfecti*, the outer dimension of the sacrament is no longer a necessity but in fact becomes an impediment,⁵⁴⁴ Suso places sacramental communion at the center of devotional life.

A Question of Frequency

Many reform-oriented theologians in Suso’s time thought that among the first Christians, in the golden age of the Church, the sacrament was received daily.

⁵³⁸ *Watch* 291; *Hor.* 18-19 ... *ratio dubii, quia nosti eum, qui dicit: ‘Crede et manducasti.’*

⁵³⁹ Unlike Angenendt’s suggestion, see (2005), p. 241.

⁵⁴⁰ *Watch* 291; *Hor.* 571.22-23 *simul habet donare cum dono, causam cum effectu.*

⁵⁴¹ *STh.* III Q 80 A 1 rp; cf. Schlette (1960), p. 22.

⁵⁴² See *Exemplar* 284-5; *Bdew* 302.9-20.

⁵⁴³ See also *Watch* 266-67; *Hor.* 548.49.

⁵⁴⁴ See Rubin (1991/2002), p. 316.

This practice was seen to have deteriorated as the world came of age.⁵⁴⁵ For individuals and groups who pursued a pure and ‘restored’ Christian life, frequent communion was an important element of piety, as seen among late medieval saints, mystics, and the emerging groups of lay religious such as the *Devotio moderna*.

The minimal requirement for lay communion set by the Fourth Lateran Council was once per year during Easter, but a growing opinion in the later Middle Ages was that a more frequent communion was beneficial. This is one of the issues that, by Suso’s time, was not clarified by theologians, and where opinions and local practices diverged. One tendency, however, is quite strong: Peter Browe pointed to a variety of theologians from the mid thirteenth century and later who advocated a *more frequent* communion for the laity.⁵⁴⁶ This opinion was to spread, especially among reform oriented theologians and groups, and the issue was central in the Eucharist controversy involving Jan Hus in the following century.⁵⁴⁷ For Berthold von Regensburg, for the nuns of Helfta, or for Meister Eckhart, the simple rule is: “Je öfter, desto besser.”⁵⁴⁸ Within a context of mystically oriented theologians and preachers, frequent communion is often praised as beneficial, as seen in the spirituality of the nuns portrayed in the Sister-books. Spiritual communion and the question of frequency of communion are closely related themes. For instance, both Eckhart and Tauler praise spiritual communion, on the grounds that it may be received more often this way.⁵⁴⁹

The chapter in our present interest also addresses the question of frequency among the other ‘practical’ questions in its final part. When the Servant asks Eternal Wisdom if it is better to receive frequently or infrequently, the answer refers to “the well-known maxim of the great teacher Augustine: depending on the circumstances, both may be recommended.”

⁵⁴⁵ Willing (2004), p. 90.

⁵⁴⁶ Browe (1929/2003), pp. 82-86.

⁵⁴⁷ Rubin (1991/2002), p. 70. Frequent communion was a “Schibboleth der Partei der Erweckten oder reformatorisch Gesinnet” in that particular area (Krummel, cited in Grosse (1994), p. 199), and, in combination of the claim of communion *utraque*, i.e. including both bread and wine for lay, it led to the well known controversies of the later Middle Ages. See Mossman (2010).

⁵⁴⁸ See Boeckl (1924), p. 97. Cf. Eckhart *RdU* 20, *Werke* II, pp. 394-403.

⁵⁴⁹ See Johannes Tauler’s *Sermon* 31, ed. Hoffman p. 219.

For Suso, it is important to maintain the dignity of the sacrament, as we have seen above. Thus it is appropriate, he says, “at times to abstain out of respect”.⁵⁵⁰ Dignity of the sacrament and awe for the majestic God who is present in it, are necessary elements of Eucharistic piety.

Whereas some reform-oriented theologians and groups advocated frequent communion, others worried that too frequent communion could endanger the appropriate awe of the Holy Sacrament.⁵⁵¹ The Disciple suggests something of this sort when he looks back on his ‘previous life’ and complains: “every day I was bidden to the most delectable table, and I came away from it starving.”⁵⁵² Suso’s attitude is somewhat conservative on this matter. As for reception out of habit, he is hesitant to recommend frequent communion; he is in line with the decision of his own order of restraining reception on the basis of maintaining the worthiness of the sacrament.⁵⁵³

Just as love grows by the power of the sacrament,⁵⁵⁴ this also goes the other way around. The sacrament caused fear and made people stay away from it, and abstention was generally seen as dangerous to the soul.⁵⁵⁵ It is better, says Suso, to receive every week, or “even once a day,” out of humility and love, than to abstain out of fear. Fear of the sacrament was a substantial problem (see more on this below). It caused people to put restrictions upon themselves, and thus to keep away from this necessary sacrament.⁵⁵⁶ The effect of receiving the sacrament properly and in good intention is, after all, an increased devotion.⁵⁵⁷ Preparation

⁵⁵⁰ Abstaining out of humility is the motive in a legend that portrayed the piety of Bonaventure. See Grosse (1994), p. 207, n. 63.

⁵⁵¹ For this reason the Franciscan and the Dominican order imposed restrictions on communion for their members during the thirteenth century and so the rhythm of communion was fixed to twelve times a year. Willing (2004), p. 92.

⁵⁵² *Watch* 277; *Hor.* 558.25-27.

⁵⁵³ See Willing (2004), p. 92.

⁵⁵⁴ See Miri Rubin (1991/2002) on Peter Comestor, p. 64.

⁵⁵⁵ Cf. Rubin (1991/2002), p. 66.

⁵⁵⁶ See also Mossman (2010).

⁵⁵⁷ *Watch* 289 “And for those in whom both respect for the sacrament and devotion increase through frequent receiving, it will be profitable to receive it frequently.” *Hor.* 569.4-6 *Quibus vero ex frequenti accessu reverentia sacramenti partier et devotio accrescit, his frequentation ipsius utilis erit.*

and reception strengthen each other in an interplay.⁵⁵⁸ Everyone could agree on the dictum that said: “Love grows by the power of the sacrament.”⁵⁵⁹ In contrast, to withhold from sacrament causes a decrease of devotion. Hence, “day by day,” the people who stay away become less disposed for a good and fruitful reception.

The general rule, repeated in the last part of the dialogue, is: *ceteris paribus*, it is better to go often.⁵⁶⁰ The advice is rather to go to the altar than to stay away “considering your own frailty.”⁵⁶¹ From this point of view, the Eucharist is beneficial, and a relatively high frequency recommended. In addition, as we saw, for those who are kept away (*fraudentur*), spiritual communion is an alternative, although sacramental and spiritual communion is preferred. Similarly, Suso states that the “..highest good is so copious and so infinite that the more it is perceived, the more the receiver is in some way made able to receive it.”⁵⁶²

Suso subscribes to the trend of promoting frequent communion, but he does this not without reservations. For instance, we find no statements such as those of Eckhart or Tauler, who may speak of spiritual communion that allows you to receive thousand times per day. Suso is, we have said, a proponent of a sacramentalist view, which, with its fixed limitations rules out an opinion like that of Tauler. With a traditional view in accordance with Augustine, Suso goes for a relative frequency.

There are those who receive “once a year out of arrogance.” However, arrogance, indifference, and lack of devotion are not the only problems. Eternal Wisdom mentions people who are ill advised and who think that those who are spiritually sick should stay away.⁵⁶³ This misunderstanding seems to be related to the serious issue, seen in the later part of the chapter, of abstention from communion out of *fear*. We shall return to this problem below. For now, we observe that a

⁵⁵⁸ See Willing (2004), p. 101.

⁵⁵⁹ Attributed to Guido de Orchellis (Schlette, 1960), p. 19, and Peter Comestor (Willing (2004), p.)

⁵⁶⁰ See *Watch* 287; 290; *Hor.* 567.27-28; 570.20-21.

⁵⁶¹ *Watch* 287; *Hor.* 569.28-29.

⁵⁶² *Watch* 290; *Hor.* 570.15-17.

⁵⁶³ *Watch* 287-8; *Hor.* 568.6-7.

concern of high importance for Suso is to convince people to approach in the first place. The main strategy he employs is positive encouragement.

The Fruits of the Sacrament

With characteristic expressiveness, Suso expounds on the fruits of the sacrament. These are clearly numerous and of different categories, present and future, small and immense. The sacrament is ‘holistic’ and apparently provides all types of goods. Suso draws from the teaching on Thomas Aquinas and asserts that the smallest gifts from a devout participation render unspeakable joys in the future.⁵⁶⁴ The sacrament provides effects “not only for the future, but now in [this life].” The prayer that concludes the dialogue lists a number of benefits: The sacrament drives off enemies, shuts out evils, sets love on fire, and so on. It gives good intentions and strengthens hope. In short, the fruits that are outlined in the prayer, and elsewhere, simply suggest all types of spiritual benefits and improvements that were associated with *grace* in medieval thought.⁵⁶⁵ Fruits of the sacrament contribute to the general process of spiritual growth that ends, ideally, in a blessed death, as the prayer also notes.⁵⁶⁶ The sacrament, it is said, “Kindles the heat of the spirit” and it “offers and promotes our great nourishment.”⁵⁶⁷ Like *tribulatio*, the Eucharist is said to bring about spiritual consolation, and it is a remedy against states of sadness (*tristitia*) and spiritual defectiveness. Suso also reminds his reader that the Sacrament contains both the giver and the gift, thus adding another standard element of Eucharist teaching.⁵⁶⁸ The sweetness (*suavitas*) is the ‘extra,’

⁵⁶⁴ Watch 282; Hor 562.22-26.

⁵⁶⁵ See Hamm (2009), p. 22.

⁵⁶⁶ This also suggests that one of the gifts that the sacrament is seen to ‘mediate’ is the *donum perseverantiae*, the ‘gift of perseverance’ and of remaining within God’s until the end. See comments on Suso’s Eucharist prayer below. See more on this point in the next chapter.

⁵⁶⁷ Watch 266; Hor. 548.19-21 ...*caloris spiritualis incentivum, igni divini amoris immensum praestat fomentum et ipsum fovet, devote susceptum.*

⁵⁶⁸ Watch 281 “What have I to give that is better, that is more profitable, or that is more precious than myself?” Hor. 562.5 *Quid melius, quid utilius, quidve pretiosus habeo memet ipso?* In Albert the Great the sacrament has six names, *donum* being one of them. That is, a gift, which we have not deserved. See Willing (2004), p. 107.

the surplus of the sacrament.⁵⁶⁹ “His presence heals wounds, mends hearts. He drives away sadness, and he gives joy of heart.”⁵⁷⁰ Other articulations of the ‘fruits’ are “spiritual consolations,”⁵⁷¹ “spiritual illumining,” or “divine charismata.”⁵⁷² The sacraments are the remedies, according to Eternal Wisdom, “...by which man is somehow reborn as a spiritual creature, is cherished and nourished and with grace as the means, he is brought up to the highest grade of perfection.”⁵⁷³ Through the sacrament of the altar it is even possible for some to reach ‘unspeakable’ heights of contemplation.

The Truth of the Sacrament: Eucharist Mysticism I

An important source for medieval ideas of Eucharist experience as an immersion into Christ’s divinity originates from Bernard of Clairvaux: “When we eat, we are eaten.”⁵⁷⁴ This thought of mystical union occasioned by the sacrament turns the line of argument around so that when we eat the bread, the soul is absolved into Christ.⁵⁷⁵ Such mystical interpretation finds the central aspect of the Eucharist not in the real presence and the physical *manducatio*, but in detached mystical union of the soul with God.⁵⁷⁶ As Boeckl noted, to many mystics the Sacrament is central, but as a *point of departure*. Proceeding from the outer dimension of sacramental reception, the real *effectus sacramenti* is mystical union with God.⁵⁷⁷ To

⁵⁶⁹ *Watch* 278; *Hor.* 560. Again Suso draws on the teaching of Aquinas. For the idea of sweetness in Thomas, see *STh*, Q 79, A 1, Rp 2; and A 8.

⁵⁷⁰ *Watch* 287; 568.4-5 *Sua presentia curat vulnera, medetur corda. Tristitiam depellit, et cordis laetitiam tribuit.*

⁵⁷¹ *Watch* 278; *Hor.* 559.11-12.

⁵⁷² *Watch* 283; *Hor.* 564.5-6.

⁵⁷³ *Watch* 266; *Hor.* 548.12-17 *...per quae homo quodam modo in spiritualem creaturam regeneratur, fovetur et nutritur, et gratia mediante ad summum gradum perfectionis promovetur.*

⁵⁷⁴ See Bernard’s *Sermones super cantica canticorum*, sermon 71, Vol. VI, p. 448. This formulation is seen for instance in Tauler. See Leppin (2001), p. 196.

⁵⁷⁵ See Leppin (2001).

⁵⁷⁶ See Fenten (2007b), p. 42; Enders (1993), p. 300.

⁵⁷⁷ For traditional language on Eucharist mysticism, see Willing (2004), pp. 226-29, and Mossman (2010), p. 238.

use the formulation of Volker Leppin, there is not so much an emphasis on the real presence as on the ‘real experience’ of the Eucharist.⁵⁷⁸

To an extent all Eucharist theology contains a dimension of mysticism and participation in the divine, as worthy reception of the sacramental species meant participation in the mystical body of Christ.⁵⁷⁹ For instance, Berthold von Regensburg, the popular Franciscan preacher of the thirteenth century explained in his exposition of the mass that the priest’s breaking of the disc in three pieces symbolized the three ‘groups’ that participate in the sacrament: God and his court of saints and angels, the living humans, and the souls in purgatory. Celebration of the Mass also effected relief to the poor suffering souls.⁵⁸⁰

The really present body of Christ brought about the reality of the mystical body of Christ, which equals the Church and the *communio sanctorum*. The community of the sacrament meant that the Church *militans* and the Church *triumphans* celebrated together; the wayfarers taking the bread and wine and the angels eating the heavenly bread (communicating spiritually). What distinguishes this from Eucharist mysticism, according to a standard use of such a term, is the communal aspect.⁵⁸¹ In a genuinely mystical Eucharist piety, on the other hand, the effect and presence in the sacrament pertained to the inner core of the individual.⁵⁸²

In Suso’s Eucharist thought, the concept of *communitas*, that is, the Eucharist as a celebration and participation in the *communio sanctorum*, seems to be irrelevant. As seen above, Suso’s text touches upon a range of ideas that were standard Eucharist teaching, and he is for the most part in alignment with the established doctrine. This exception does not have to mean that he goes against the idea of *communitas*, but that it receives little interest, and is not used in any sense as an argument in encouraging the individual to strengthen devotion. Even when he provides an etymological explanation of the term ‘Mass’ according to a

⁵⁷⁸ Leppin (2001), pp. 195-96.

⁵⁷⁹ See Mossman (2010), p. 236.

⁵⁸⁰ Berthold von Regensburg, *Von der messe*, pp. 488-505.

⁵⁸¹ See Mossman (2010), p. 236.

⁵⁸² See Grosse (1994).

common medieval understanding of its meaning, this explanation is only relevant for the individual's personal relation to God. Eternal Wisdom explains that when the communicant

... receives the most sacred host and feeds upon it spiritually (...) heaven is somehow opened, and the beloved Son is sent and united, bodily and spiritually, to a soul disposed towards him, and this is why "Mass" has its name, from the Father's sending (*missa a missione paterna appellantur*)⁵⁸³

Communion ultimately means personal encounter of the individual soul with Christ. Suso does not refer to Bernard's reversal of the *manducatio* ("when we eat, we are eaten"), but he suggests a similar idea of immersion of the inner human occasioned by the Eucharist: "Where was ever anything heard or seen that bespeaks more love than to become love itself in grace?"⁵⁸⁴ On a different occasion in the same chapter, Wisdom/Christ evokes the teaching of Augustine: "I give myself to you and take you from yourself and unite you with me"⁵⁸⁵ — another 'classic' articulation of Eucharist union much used in the later Middle Ages.⁵⁸⁶ In the following, we shall look into some passages that show a distinct Eucharist mysticism.

We recall that there is a distinct gradualism of preparedness in Suso's teaching. His three categories of receivers, as seen above, calls to mind the traditional three-stage pattern in mystical theology, the beginner (*incipientes*), the advanced (*proficientes*) and the perfect (*perfecti*).⁵⁸⁷ Given advancement to the highest state

⁵⁸³ *Watch* 290-91; *Hor.* 570.27-571.2.

⁵⁸⁴ This idea is expressed in a similar way in the Unterlinden Sister-book. Angenendt (2005), s. 325, provides a translation from the *vita* of sister Benedicta von Egensheim: "als sie eines Tages nach Brauch ihres Ordens am Leib des Herrn teilgenommen hatte, süß über di unaussprechliche Würde und Gnade dieses Sakramentes nachzudenken; sie löste sich ganz in Liebe zu ihrem Geliebten auf [*tota liquefacta in amorem dilecti sui*] und verspürte plötzlich auf wundersame und fühlbare Weise, dass das Blut des Herrn Jesus Christus, das sie empfangen hatte, wie ein Strom mit Macht hervorbracht und sich in alle Glieder ihres Leibes ergoss [*tanquam fluius cum impetu erumpens per omnia membra corporis sui defluxit*], zum Innersten ihrer Seele vordrang, dort allen Schmutz der Laster auskochte [*excoxit*] und sie zu einem ganz klaren Gefäß der Heiligkeit machte [*efficiens vas purissimum sanctitatis*]."

⁵⁸⁵ *nec tu me in te mutabis sicut cibum carnis tuae, sed tu mutaberis in me*. St. Augustine, *Confessiones*, VII, 10, n. 16 [PL 32 742]. This phrase was also used in the Dominican Breviary, on the feast of St. Augustine.

⁵⁸⁶ Mossman (2010), p. 239.

⁵⁸⁷ For a similar pattern in Johannes Tauler's Eucharist sermons, see Willing (2004), p. 152.

of preparedness, Suso admits, it is possible to penetrate to the real *truth* of the sacrament. "... at times by grace and special privilege" some of the most advanced spirits are "permitted, in some way which cannot be told, to perceive this sacrament's truth." Thus Suso calls attention to a unique type of Eucharist experience, which some people apparently can achieve.

Whereas the presence of Christ in the sacrament is stressed in the first part of the dialogue, Suso continues his treatise with a few passages that describe a sacramental mysticism and a union no longer attached to the ritual of the Eucharist. This type of "happy union", Suso claims, can be experienced as proceeding from the Eucharist, or outside it.⁵⁸⁸ In the fashion of 'classic' mysticism, we might say, the movement here goes from the humanity to the divinity of Christ, which is experienced on a level beyond the concrete and sensible.⁵⁸⁹

The mystical Eucharistic experience offers a "schooling" in future blessedness. It is described interchangeably as a "happy union,"⁵⁹⁰ a "spiritual foretasting,"⁵⁹¹ "spiritual illumining," "divine charismata," or as "consolation."⁵⁹² Whereas an 'objective' certainty of faith was seen as an important part of Suso's Eucharist thought earlier, this part is on rapture occasioned by the Eucharist that delves further into a realm of *experiential* certainty of salvation. "Some men," Eternal Wisdom explains, "are granted that they may perceive this sacrament's truth, by opening the book of their hearts."

Let us consider a crucial passage where this 'foretasting' is articulated.

Even though this may not always happen, still at times by grace and special privilege they are permitted, in some way which cannot be told, to perceive this sacrament's truth. And this is done so that even if it were possible for there to be some greater and more certain knowledge than the knowledge of faith still it is through faith's knowledge that you are granted to know and to perceive this inestimable

⁵⁸⁸ An axiom in medieval theology was that God's power of grace was not bound to the sacraments alone; *gratiam suam non alligavit sacramentis* (*STh* III 64), see Schlette (1969), pp. 22; 53.

⁵⁸⁹ Cf. K. Ruh's observation on Bernard of Clairvaux (1990), pp. 234-49.

⁵⁹⁰ *Watch* 277; *Hor* 558.7 *In hac felici unione...*

⁵⁹¹ "Spiritual foretasting," according to Antje Willing, (2004), p. 181, was a much used formulation relation to the Eucharist in traditional mystical literature, but also in scholastic theology. See *STh* III q 79, a. 4.

⁵⁹² See Chapter One, pp. 41-46.

sacrament's truest existence, so that, for a time, faith seem somehow to cease to be actual faith, and the matter seems to pass into the realm of true and perfect knowledge. It is true that what I have said is not according to the common mode of proceeding, because this knowledge surpasses all the elements and principles of all branches of knowledge. Nor will this grace always be present in those who are most dear to God (...) but only from time to time, when, that is, the soul is caught up on high and lifted to the perception of heavenly mysteries as divine grace then deigns to make manifest "these, and things like them," that grace which "reveals deep things out of darkness," (Jb 12.22) and sometimes grants the soul to transcend manifestations, which are riddles made known to the senses, lifting them up to the invisible and "hidden things of the secret places" (Is 43.5) of God.⁵⁹³

Expressed here is the highest state of knowing, but within the "School of virtues," not the schools of the world.⁵⁹⁴ Such an advancement into rapture is described as the "matter" passing into "the realm of true and perfect knowledge."⁵⁹⁵

It is a contemplation of God's truth far greater than any scientific method can enable,⁵⁹⁶ and a more certain knowledge than the knowledge of faith (*scientiam maiorem et certiolem scientia fidei*).⁵⁹⁷

It is interesting to notice that most of these passages on the unique experiential certainty occasioned by the Eucharist are in fact unique to the *Horologium*; they are not seen in the *Bdew* version of Suso's Eucharist dialogue. Usually, as for mystical content, it is the other way around: the *Horologium*, as demonstrated with several examples thought this study, shows a tendency to downplay the

⁵⁹³ Watch 284; Hor. 564.25-565.8 *Equidem etsi non semper, quandoque tamen ex gratia et privilegio speciali datur quodam modo ineffabiliter percipi veritas huius sacramenti, ita ut etsi possibile sit esse aliquam scientiam maiorem et certiolem scientia fidei, per hanc datur sciri et cognosci huius inestimabilis sacramenti verissima existentia, ut pro tunc fides quodam modo actualiter cessare videatur, et res putetur transisse in veram perfectamque cognitionem. Hoc quidem dixerim non secundum communem cursum, cum omnium scientiarum elementa et principia haec excedat cognitio. Nec ispis quidem carissimis haec gratia semper aderit... sed solum interdum, cum videlicet anima ad superna rapitur et ad caelestia mysteria cognoscenda elevatur, prout tunc divina gratia haec vel his similia dignatur manifestare, quae revelat occulta de tenebris et aenigmaticas ac sensibiles interdum dat supergredi manifestationes et ad invisibilia et arcana secretorum Dei extollit.*

⁵⁹⁴ See Watch 266; Hor. 548.4.

⁵⁹⁵ Watch 284; Hor. 564.30-31 *res putetur transisse in veram perfectamque cognitionem.*

⁵⁹⁶ Watch 284 "... not according to the common mode of proceeding, because this knowledge surpasses all the elements and principles of all branches of knowledge." Hor. 564.31-565.2 ... *non secundum communem cursum, cum omnium scientiarum elementa et principia haec excedat cognitio.*

⁵⁹⁷ Watch 284; Hor. 564.27-28.

mystical aspects that are seen in the *Bdew*.⁵⁹⁸ In the case of the Eucharist teaching, then, the *Horologium* displays a mysticism ‘of its own’—one that is different from that which is seen in Suso’s German works. It is a traditionally formulated contemplative mysticism. Although such breakthrough and special privilege is not bound to the Eucharist, it seems an appropriate occasion for Suso.⁵⁹⁹

The Eucharist can be a point of breakthrough, to the experience of the eternal truths. A part of the soul (“the essence of blessed spirits”) attains this high state of understanding and certainty. This passage shows that Suso stands within the tradition of Eckhart and Thomas when he suggests that this momentary rapture is one of *intellective* union, and not a union of will. According to Dominican tradition (but also, however, in Duns Scotus), the *synderesis*, the ‘highest’ part of the soul (Eckhart: *Seelefünklein*), was located in the intellect, and not in the will, as it was for Bonaventura and a more affective mystical tradition.⁶⁰⁰

This high form of knowing is explicitly held as a *foretaste*, and is contrasted to future salvation, when the *whole* of the soul enjoys this vision.⁶⁰¹ It is a typical feature of the *Horologium* that when such high mysticism is discussed, it is always emphasized that the full union, the total enjoyment, or mystical union in the ultimate sense, occurs in heaven and not on earth. It will be seen in the following chapter of this study that Suso, in the *Horologium*, is careful to underline the difference between what may be achieved here in this life and what is to come in the next.⁶⁰² Suso emphasizes that such unique rapture is a “...schooling for the illumination that is to come.” On another occasion in the same chapter it is stated that “...it is he alone who glows out and fills the essence of blessed spirits with himself so that they are made one spirit with him. O, how great will be the glory, how immeasurable the brightness, when the whole soul, drawn out of itself, is

⁵⁹⁸ See e.g. the final section of Chapter Three in this study.

⁵⁹⁹ See Willing (2004), p. 129, concerning the distinction between speculative and contemplative mysticism in Eucharist treatises.

⁶⁰⁰ See Oberman (1983), Pp. 65-67.

⁶⁰¹ *Watch* 282-83; *Hor.* 563.12-17.

⁶⁰² See the final section of this study.

wholly transformed into God.”⁶⁰³ Despite the heights of experience that are possible for some “lucky few,” the primary point in these passages is nevertheless to illustrate what the sacrament causes in terms of *future* blessedness, and that the faithful receivers will take part in this in the next world even if they do not reach such heights of contemplation in life. Again, faith is the main category: “All these qualities,” meaning the divine things that the exalted mind contemplates momentarily, “(...) will in the future be given to the faithful soul through its due partaking in this sacrament.”

The “special privilege” of contemplation described in the passage is, as it were, a moment’s certainty. When the soul returns from such rapture, it “will know almost nothing of what it saw before.” This experiential certainty, this entering into the “realm of true and perfect knowledge,” happens by God’s help, by the means of grace. That is to say, it is not something that humans can attain by own means. Such formulations of contemplation by means grace are not uncommon in mysticism.⁶⁰⁴ Whereas such a lucky achievement of momentary union proceeds from, and builds on faith, Suso is careful to underline that the soul being lifted up is a work of divine grace, not of faith. Suso calls on the reader to observe that this “spiritual foretasting ... is no effect due to faith, nor is it of this present time.” That is to say, the communicant should not expect that his *faith* in the sacrament will take him to great heights.

We observe that it is of importance for Suso to ‘restrain’ this mysticism, and to lower the expectations as far as Eucharist experience is concerned. Whereas this possibility of high union is held, still one should not *expect* to perceive any effect of the sacrament.⁶⁰⁵ The achievement is exclusive to the top category of recipients, the *perfecti*, who are free and detached from all the distractions of the world, and have reached an ultimate stage of purgation in this life.⁶⁰⁶ However, it

⁶⁰³ *Watch* 282; *Hor.* 563 ...*quam immensa claritas, cum anima tota extra se posita, tota in Deum transformabitur.*

⁶⁰⁴ The formulation derives from Wilhelm of St. Thierry’s *Epistola ad fratres de Monte Dei*, which, in this time was ascribed to Bernard of Clairvaux. Grosse, p. 207, n. 60. The thought is reflected in both Eckhart and Tauler. See more in the next chapter of this study.

⁶⁰⁵ See Eckhart, *RdU* 20.

⁶⁰⁶ Cf. Willing (2004), p. 156.

is interesting to notice, again, that it is *faith*—and not detachment, the typical category of mystic preparation—that, receives emphasis. Such an experience of the ‘truth of the Sacrament,’ Suso is careful to underline, proceeds from a basis of faith. It is a continuation of faith and “faith’s knowledge” (*scientia fidei*). However, it is interesting to note that it emphatically *proceeds from faith*, and also *returns to faith* after the rapture ends: “But when the soul is separated from such things, it will return to the customary proofs of faith.”⁶⁰⁷ To continue the comparison with Eckhart and Tauler, we can say that for these mystics, the idea of detachment and union with God is usually at the center of attention, also when they speak about the Eucharist. Burkhart Hasebrink has found that in Eckhart’s “Counsels of Discernment,”⁶⁰⁸ the ritual process receives little interest, and the idea of transubstantiation is reinterpreted in a totally spiritualized sense as the inner transformation of the human soul into unity with God. Suso permits a full transformation only in the future. Unlike Eckhart’s idea of transformation, or Johannes Tauler’s ‘quest within,’ to the ground of the soul, Suso’s conception of mysticism as seen above is one that is connected to faith as a basic category. Faith is relational; it attaches to something *ad extra*.⁶⁰⁹ In the context of the Eucharist chapter, the proofs of faith refer to the real presence in the Eucharist. This articulates a ‘reattachment’ to the sacramental situation. Suso *combines* a mystical attitude and an idea of momentary departure with a profoundly sacramental view. It was seen earlier that Suso, unlike mystics such as Eckhart and Tauler, gives prevalence to sacramental communion and does not give much attention to spiritual communion. It was seen at the outset of our reading that Suso stresses Christ’s institution of the sacrament, and the priestly authority that derives from this event. Throughout he calls attention to the sacramental situation, the actual ritual. The reason for this comparison is to emphasize that Suso’s piety gives prevalence also to the outer dimensions of the sacrament and the patterns of devotion that surrounds it. Whereas Tauler generally promotes a radically interiorized Eucharist piety, where even the outer prayer with the mouth is seen disturb the inner prayer of the

⁶⁰⁷ *Watch* 285; *Hor.* 565.9 *consueta fidei documenta*.

⁶⁰⁸ *Rede der Unterscheidung, RdU* or “Erfurter Rede”.

⁶⁰⁹ Hamm (2010a), p. 68.

heart,⁶¹⁰ Suso, on the other hand, engages all means, outer and inner, that can strengthen devotion; he speaks of gestures of piety directed to the Eucharist, and he even provides a prayer to be said when approaching the altar.

Unio mystica is suggested in parts of the Eucharist dialogue, but it is not a main point, in this part or in the *Horologium* in general. In the Eucharist chapter, although it is the ‘high point’ among the possible Eucharist experiences, the contemplative state that we saw expressed above, is only treated in a few passages in an otherwise quite extensive text. Suso’s Eternal Wisdom repeats that this type of experience is for the “lucky few,” for “some men.” The Disciple’s dialogue partner is instructive, yet secretive and clearly hesitant about going too far in describing the heights of Eucharist union. This ultimate level of experience, this moment of “certain knowledge,” is to be kept within the horizon of pious endeavor as a goal and promise, for those among the audience who are advanced and lucky enough to obtain this state of perfection in this life.

It is typical of Suso’s wide approach to spirituality that he admits this possibility for some, but also that he does not dwell on it for very long.⁶¹¹ Seen as a whole, the chapter gives far more attention to the various challenges and difficulties that keep people *away* from the sacrament.

The Bridal Couch: Eucharist Mysticism II

The part on ‘intellective Eucharist experience’ that was just addressed is not the only description of Eucharist union found in this chapter. In the following passage, Eternal Wisdom describes how the communicant should act when the effect occurs, and we see that a rather different conception is at play:

And so let yourself be drawn by the devotion of the moment, rather than by lazy habit. Adorn the little hospice of your heart with most ardent affections and most holy meditations for him, as if with blushing roses and paling lilies, and prepare a bridal couch for such a bridegroom with true peace of heart. And when you feel

⁶¹⁰ Thali (2009), p. 267.

⁶¹¹ See *Watch* 282 “I pass over in silence...”; *Hor.* 562.26 *Tacitis...*

that he is present, lay him to rest in your heart's arms by shutting out every earthly love and shutting in your heavenly spouse.⁶¹²

Let us observe two things. First, we see here a somewhat different concept than in the mystical passages seen above. There, Suso outlined an *intellective* or contemplative mysticism that clearly is a 'passing' into a vision of the divinity, in a 'classic' scheme of contemplative mysticism. Berndt Hamm has described another tendency in the later medieval period, a 'mysticism of descent,' which tends to focus attention on sin and humans' need for salvific grace and the inward mediation of such grace. He has found this to be one characteristic strand in late medieval theology of piety.⁶¹³ This passage from the *Horologium* corresponds well to this type of mysticism identified by Hamm. Rather than an ascent of the soul occasioned by the Eucharist encounter, this part emphasizes the heart as a 'receptor,' and Christ of the Eucharist as *descending* into the heart of the human.

The passage evokes an imagery of bridal mysticism and an idea of Christ's presence and embrace within the human being as the result of Eucharist reception. The heart as a hospice calls to mind classic imagery from bridal mysticism of the lover and the beloved sharing the bridal couch.

We should note that there are several parallel conceptions of Sacramental experience at play in this text. This suggests to us that Suso is an author who does not present one clear teaching, but is willing to engage several concepts, most likely in order to include a wide audience of varying preferences and abilities: Whereas the former concept of Eucharist mysticism is one where the soul ascends to a state of contemplation, other passages articulate the human as a 'low' receptor into which the human Christ descends, or "deigns"; an intellective concept of *unio mystica*, on the one hand, and an *affective* concept of inner embrace in the heart/soul of the recipient, on the other. The former emphasizes knowing and

⁶¹² *Watch* 276; *Hor.* 557.24 *Itemque actualis devotio te potius trahat quam indulta consuetudo. Ardentissimis affectionibus et sanctissimis meditationibus tamquam rosis rubescentibus et liliis albescentibus hospitium cordis tui ei 'adorna' et 'thalamum' tanto sponso per veram cordis pacem praepara. Et cum praesentem senseris, inter cordis brachia ipsum reclina per exclusionem omnis terreni amoris et inclusionem sponsi caelestis.*

⁶¹³ "Deszendenzmystik." Hamm (2010a) uses the term to describe the thought of Johan von Staupitz and the typical 15th century democratized mysticism.

certain understanding, terms that relate to the cognitive part of humans, whereas this passage points to the affects, love, and the difference between earthly love and love of Christ. Importantly, the intellectual experience of passing into a certain knowledge, is described as a unique event, whereas this inner reception of Christ into the heart is held as a more ‘normal’ proceeding, and is mentioned along with the standard elements of preparation. With the aspect of Suso’s Eucharist teaching that is seen in the previous quote, we may speak of an ‘every day’ mysticism of descent.

The second point we should observe is that whereas Suso, in the passage we saw above, outlined a *raptus* of contemplation, which was as a *momentary* thing, this passage on the entering of Christ in the heart pronounces a lasting impact and influence of Christ’s presence. An important point for Suso is that this embrace should be *maintained*; the fruit, which is Christ himself, is to be preserved in the heart. Elsewhere he complains that people are unaware of what they receive and if they, for a moment become aware, this mindfulness easily vanishes and the fruits are not preserved. This presence of Christ as result from devout celebration should be preserved as much as possible; this points to another important element of piety in the *Horologium*: the ideal perseverance within God’s grace, which, in the end, permits a good death.⁶¹⁴ The prayer that Suso provides at the end of this dialogue on the Eucharist shows that perseverance is one of the gifts that the communicant should pray for when she approaches the altar. This element of perseverance shows that there is, in association with the Eucharist, an idea of a healing presence that does not pertain only to exceptional situations, but is, rather, an ‘every day’ mysticism.

The fruits of the sacrament are numerous and of a great variety. Again, Suso shows himself as a quite flexible and *integrative* theologian. Antje Willing observes a similar integrative pedagogic strategy in Marquard von Lindau,⁶¹⁵ and notes that this kind of texts addressed a spectrum of audiences with different levels of spiritual advancement. Thus we find not a leveling of one particular

⁶¹⁴ See Grosse (1994), pp. 36-39.

⁶¹⁵ Willing (2004).

message, but an *integration* of various elements into a whole. The same tendency can be seen in Suso's Eucharist dialogue. In the course of a few passages, Suso may speak of the highest possible union, occasioned by the Eucharist, and the lowest degree of 'weak' spirituality. Similarly, he may hold a bernardian ideal of perfect love within sight,⁶¹⁶ and at the same time devote much attention to the lack of affection and the problems that caused people to be hesitant about communion.

"Dry Bread and Tasteless Food"

Whereas some people attain unspeakable fruits from the sacrament, others receive nothing at all, or, merely "dry bread," *panem artum*. Suso's teaching on *manducatio*, on receiving the sacrament, has a peculiar outcome compared to 'classic' Eucharist theory that will now be discussed.⁶¹⁷

Suso's Disciple laments his previous insensibility to the presence in the Sacrament. He exclaims; "The dew from heaven fell on me, but I did not feel it. Every day I was bidden to the most delectable table, and I came from it empty and starved."⁶¹⁸ As usual in the *Horologium*, the Disciple's behavior and feelings are symptoms of a widespread tendency of religiosity in a poor state. The Disciple moves on in more general terms:

O, how few there are in this world who use diligence and pains to ponder the most precious power and profit of this sacrament! For they drift along, led by some outworn custom, following the tracks of the herd. They hasten, not to arrive, but to draw back, and their haste is not from devotion's longing but from their lack of fervor for God; and so they roam forward as if dazed, and stray back again, empty and lacking in grace.⁶¹⁹

⁶¹⁶ *Watch* 281 "But perhaps you have not grown perfect in love, you love not love alone, but you love some reward of love..." *Hor.* 562.10-11 *Sed fortassis nondum in amore perfectus es, non solum amorem sed eius aliqualem diligens mercedem...*

⁶¹⁷ The following draws in part on the studies of Antje Willing (2004) and Stephen Mossman (2010).

⁶¹⁸ *Watch* 277; *Hor.* 558.25-26 *Ad mensam deliciosissimam cotidie invitatus fui, et vacuus ac macie confectus inde recessi.*

⁶¹⁹ *Watch* 285; *Hor.* 565.19-24 *Quam pauci sunt in hoc mundo, qui diligenti sollicitudine curent ponderare sacramenti huius pretiosissimam virtutem et utilitatem. Accedunt quidem arida quadam ducti consuetudine, morem communitatis sectantes. Festinantes non ut accedant, sed ut*

The magnificent presence of Christ and the numerous fruits that can be received from this presence—both “present and future”—stands for Suso in grave contrast to the manner in which many people approach the altar.

Again it is seen that an important precondition is to ponder and consider deeply that which is received, the real presence of the Eucharist and its profit (*utilitatem*). If this is not done, the proper awe and devotion will be lacking. As Suso repeatedly complains, many people go away from the altar “starving,” that is, without having received the benefits from the living bread.⁶²⁰ The idea of sweetness from the sacrament as seen above,⁶²¹ also called the ‘bread of angels,’ contrasts the *panem artem*, the “dry bread” and empty result from communion without devotion. Suso wants to encourage devotion by pointing to the great merits (salvation and future bliss) gained by even the smallest grace achieved from the sacrament.⁶²² Reception without devotion means to receive the sacrament *without its effect*, as opposed to “the sacrament and its power.”⁶²³ This is expressed several times.⁶²⁴ People who are unaware and indifferent, as seen in the previous quote, “stray back ... empty and lacking grace.” We recall that Suso points to three categories of recipients, the unprepared (*indispositi*), the un-devout (*indevoli*), and the well prepared (*bene dispositi*). To these three categories there is a corresponding pattern of effects of the sacrament, we may recall, and also here we see the same option is held:

recedant. Festinantes non ex affectu, sed ex defectu divinis fervoris; et ido sicut vacui accedunt, sic et inanes ac sine gratia recedunt.

⁶²⁰ See also *Watch* 286 “... eating dry bread and tasteless food, and not perceiving the sweetness of the sacrament.” *Hor.* 566.10-11 ...*panem artum et cibum insipidum comedentes eius non percipiunt suavitatem.*

⁶²¹ See for instance *Watch* 278; *Hor.* 559.1-20.

⁶²² Again, a connection to the teaching of Thomas Aquinas may be observed. *STh* I-IIae, q 113, a.9, ad 2. See Künzle (1977).

⁶²³ *Watch* 291; *Hor.* 571.13-14 *Solum sacramentum / Sacramentum et eius virtutem*

⁶²⁴ See also *Watch* 291: “There are those who receive me sacramentally at this table and still go away fasting. ... those men perceive the sacrament alone”; *Hor.* 571.11-14 *Sunt qui me in hac mensa sacramentaliter recipiunt et tamen eiuni recedunt. ... illi quidem solum sacramentum ... percipiunt.*

The first deserve death in eternity and cursing on this earth; the second deserve eternal life and spiritual blessing; the third are eating dry bread and tasteless food, and not perceiving the sweetness of the sacrament.⁶²⁵

Suso shows much concern in this treatise for the middle category of receivers, the “poorly prepared,” who are in-between the *perfecti* and the unprepared, mortal sinners. The problem with this middle category of communicants, we recall, is not that they have not confessed nor fulfilled the formal requirements, but that they are *not devout*. Hence, they do not receive the fruit of the sacrament. In order to receive the effect of the sacrament, one had to eat not only sacramentally but also spiritually, and this required an inner *intention*, a desire to receive the body of the Lord.

The idea that there was a reception of the sacramental species only, *manducatio sacramentaliter tantum*, was standard element in Eucharist theory. For Albert the Great, and after him, eating sacramentally and spiritually was linked to the full reception of grace (*res tantum*). For Thomas Aquinas, there came a distinction between the effect of grace and the effect of sweetness (*suavitas*), and the former could be achieved without the latter.⁶²⁶ However, there is still a basis of habitual grace effectuated by worthy reception.⁶²⁷ Oppositely *maducatio mere sacramentalis* simply meant unworthy communion, for Thomas Aquinas and in earlier scholasticism.⁶²⁸ This way of thought omitted categories of potential receivers who did not recognize the species as containing the real body of Christ, such as unbelievers, Christians who held the sacrament in contempt or, as addressed by several major theologians, animals who received the body of the Lord, as with the often discussed problem of the mouse that eats consecrated bread.⁶²⁹

As the idea of the real presence and hence the worthiness of the sacrament itself became an established part of Eucharist theology, theologians became in-

⁶²⁵ *Watch* 286; *Hor.* 8-11 *Primi merentur aeternam mortem et temporalem maledictionem; secundi vitam aeternam et spiritualem benedictionem; tertii panem artum et cibum insipidum comedentes eius non percipiunt suavitatem.*

⁶²⁶ Cf. *STh* III, q 80.

⁶²⁷ *STh* III, q 79. A 8.

⁶²⁸ Schlette (1960), p. 22.

⁶²⁹ See Macy (1999), ch 3, pp. 36-58; Rubin (1991/2002), pp. 65-68; see also Aris (2007).

creasingly occupied with the issue of the worthiness of the communicant.⁶³⁰ Confession and institutionalized penance had long been established as formal criteria for worthiness. In addition came fasting and other prerequisites. In his work on the Eucharist, the Franciscan theologian and exegete Nicholas of Lyra, a slightly older contemporary of Heinrich Suso, lists twelve conditions that had to be fulfilled for a worthy communion to take place.⁶³¹ Gary Macy sums up Lyra's requirements:

One must be a human, a viator (that is still in this life), a believer, an adult, mentally competent, fasting devoutly, without awareness of mortal sin, not guilty of notorious crimes, having a clean body, not prohibited by the appearance of a miracle, having a proper minister, and finally having a right intention.⁶³²

In Suso's time, several theologians spoke of the importance of the communicant's intentions and devotion as preconditions for worthy communion. On another occasion in the same work, Lyra connects the lack of devotion even more explicitly to unworthy communion.⁶³³

What is unique in Suso's option compared to this is that communion without devotion is *not* an unworthy communion. It is simply 'fruitless.' As Antje Willing comments, the tendency of differentiated degrees of grace according to the amount of devotion and the option of reception wholly without grace, is not found in traditional teaching on *manducatio*.⁶³⁴ From the last excerpt we can see that "death in eternity and cursing on this earth," that is the unworthy 'Judas communion,' is reserved only for the *indispositi*, the unprepared. The un-devout receive dry bread, indeed, but not damnation. For this type of unfruitful communion Suso uses the description *sine gratia*, "without grace," or to "go away fast-

⁶³⁰ Macy (1999), pp 47-48.

⁶³¹ Macy (1999), p. 49.

⁶³² Macy (1999), p 177.

⁶³³ *Sic etiam si quis devocionis caret ardore, dñgus non est ad sumedum cibum sacramentalem.* The formulation from Lyra's *Dicta de sacramento* is cited in Mossman (2010), p. 159.

⁶³⁴ A. Willing (2004), p. 156

ing.”⁶³⁵ This option suggests a point zero of Eucharist reception, where there is simply no effect at all, neither in the negative or positive sense.

Whereas Suso detested the ‘new opinions’ in the schools and generally sticks to a classic scholastic and sapiential theology like that of Bonaventure or Thomas Aquinas, his view on ‘fruitless’ communion was heretofore unknown in Eucharist theology. Willing has shown that a differentiation of the amount of grace received according to the devotional disposition of the communicant is found in Tauler’s sermons, and this, she claims, is based directly on Suso.⁶³⁶ Tauler, however, is more strict than Suso and maintains that un-devout communion is dangerous.⁶³⁷ A more strict and demanding approach to preparation and devotion can be observed also in one of Suso’s own letters in his *Briefbüchlein*.⁶³⁸ Unlike the *Horologium*, which calls out to a rather wide audience, these example letters were addressed to a ‘specialized’ audience of enclosed women, similar to the primary audience of Tauler’s sermons. The *Horologium* demonstrates a softer line with regard to requirements for Eucharist piety. Stephen Mossman has found, in the Eucharist treatise of Marquard of Lindau the same as we have seen in Suso, namely the tendency to reduce the category of unworthiness to a formal matter of not having prepared through confession. It lies beyond the scope of this study to decide if Marquard drew this directly from Suso. It should be safe to say that Suso was an influential writer, and even if this innovative ‘theology of reception’ is not entirely his invention (a precursor to the idea can be seen in Eckhart⁶³⁹) the idea is formulated in its full consequence in the *Bdew* and the *Horologium*.

Communion out of Habit

One of Suso’s primary concerns in this treatise is the lack of devotion among many religious people, those who wear the “religious habit” on the outside, but

⁶³⁵ See, e.g., *Watch* 291; *Hor.* 571.11-12 ...*tamen ieiuni recedunt*. the term used in the *Bdew* is *gnadlos*.

⁶³⁶ See Willing (2004); Boeckl (1924), pp. 97ff.

⁶³⁷ See Johannes Tauler’s Sermon 30, ed. Hofmann, pp. 212-213.

⁶³⁸ See *Bfb* 372.

⁶³⁹ See Meister Eckhart, *Rdu* 20.

who are without proper inner sincerity and determination.⁶⁴⁰ In relation to the Eucharist, his strategy is to encourage devotion and awareness positively by pointing to the wondrous effects to which even a small amount of devotion leads. The communion of “lazy habit” of which Suso speaks brings about neither sweetness nor grace, although the celebrants are still within the category of relative worthiness. The *manducare sacramentaliter tantum*, which had earlier been reserved for the ‘outside’ categories such as animals, infidels, or mortal sinners,⁶⁴¹ is in Suso’s version the communion of the *indevoti*, that is, the poorly prepared.⁶⁴² What Suso does, then, is to expand the possibilities for ‘spiritual reform’ by providing a new interpretation of the mode of ‘mere’ sacramental reception. The highly poetical exclamations of Christ’s presence and the wonderful effects of devout reception serves to make people aware of what they are missing and thus stir up fervor and longing; people are encouraged to “ponder” the Eucharistic presence and mobilize devotion and awareness of what it is they receive, and thus pass beyond the stage of ‘starving’ reception.

The idea of eating oneself to judgment, then, refers, in Suso’s teaching, only to the *really* unprepared, the unrepentant mortal sinner. Importantly, although this option ‘permits’ un-devout reception, it does not recommend it. The point is that this option takes pressure off the communicant. Lack of devotion leads to no direct result, neither good nor bad; it is a ‘point zero’ from which devotion can develop. This is important to notice, because it can be seen as one of Suso’s strategies to encourage communicants who *feared* the sacrament on grounds of their own state of worthiness.⁶⁴³ Suso’s approach to the problem of a religiosity of habit, we observe, is one of positive encouragement rather than of intimidation.

For the smallest grace, making a man acceptable, which anyone devoutly partaking of the sacrament merits to receive, will in the future illumine the soul with a spir-

⁶⁴⁰ See Bihlmeyer (1907/61), p. 72; 96-97.

⁶⁴¹ Grosse summons the prevailing view in scholasticism: “‘Manducare sacramentaliter tantum’ ist indessen die Kommunion der unbussfertigen Todsünder.” (1994), p. 212.

⁶⁴² See Schlette (1960), p. 22.

⁶⁴³ See below, pp. 168-75.

itual radiance greater than any ray of the sun can shine into the pure air, for spiritual gifts surpass bodily gifts beyond all compare.⁶⁴⁴

This is another example of how Suso draws upon the results from scholastic theology in order to lower the requirements for a fruitful communion. At the same time he insists on devotion as a necessary inner precondition. He draws on Aquinas' use of the concept of *gratia gratum faciens*, the grace that makes humans acceptable to God, and connects this to the fruits of the sacrament in terms of future salvation. Whereas the concept of un-devout-but-worthy communion is not found in traditional teaching, this part is drawn from Aquinas' theology of grace. In line with what has been asserted on 'theology of piety' earlier, we observe again that Suso demonstrates a *selective* use of scholastic theory, and that this use has an explicit goal: it points to that which is necessary for salvation.⁶⁴⁵

The 'Hidden Effect'

The lack of effect is an important issue to Suso; it can mean simply "dry bread," to go away "starving", with no result. At closer look, it becomes clear that the option of communion *sine gratia* is ambiguous, and again we can observe that Suso operates on more than one level when he treats the problems related to Eucharist piety. From a point of view of religious decay among contemporaries (those who "receive out of habit") and the massive emphasis on devotion as a necessity, the lack of grace from communion seems to be understood as an objective category. There is really no effect from the sacrament without devotion. However, "dry bread" is also used in another sense, as an expression that points to individual emotions and feelings of insufficiency and disappointment. An important nuance in Suso's category of fruitless reception is seen in other passages where the problems of insufficiency and *duritia* are discussed. Speaking of the hardened hearts of some of the 'friends of God,' Suso holds that there are also

⁶⁴⁴ Watch 282; Hor. 562.22-26 *Nam minima gratia gratum faciens, quam in sacramento devote sumens meretur recipere, magis animam in future spiritali irradiation clarificabit, quam aliquis solaris radius aerem purum posuit illustrare, cum spiritalia incomparabiliter excedant corporalia.*

⁶⁴⁵ Cf Hamm (1999).

those who *seemingly* return from the sacrament without fruits but in whom God has worked in a *hidden way*.⁶⁴⁶ There may seem to be a lack of effect, but this is simply because no effect has been perceived by the individual, who perhaps expected more evidence of Christ's presence and effect.

The lacking grace from the sacrament can be understood, then, from two different angles: First, in light of a reform effort directed toward a religiosity of habit, the lack of effect is a consequence of insufficient preparation in terms of inner disposition of the recipient. This is not directly perilous, we saw, but still the lack of effect from the sacrament is 'objective.' Second, this lack of devotion pertains to a subjective dimension and puts to words an acute feeling of disappointment within the individual. So, for instance, the Disciple says that in his previous life he often went to the altar and returned, with such *duritia*, such "hardness of heart" that it was "as if the sacrament in itself had in it scarcely any effect."⁶⁴⁷

The absence of any perceivable effect from communion, Suso assures his reader, is not necessarily a problem. For one thing, the effect of the sacrament is not felt by normal sensing, as we have previously noted. What is more, God may *deliberately withhold* his "consolations" of grace in order that faith may grow in people's hearts. In this sense, the seeming lack of effect from the sacrament is actually a God-willed absence, and even a sign of His friendship, which has its effect in the "merits of faith," along with God's hidden works in us, which are simply inconceivable. It is interesting to note that Suso, when speaking of this hardness of hearts and the 'hidden effect' of the sacrament, of God's withholding his gifts from communicants, he uses terms such as 'friends of God', *amici dei*, and God's 'elect.'⁶⁴⁸

In the discussion of lacking effect we encounter again the problem of *duritia*, "the hardened heart," and emotional or intentional deficiency. Characteristic

⁶⁴⁶ See Fenten (2007b).

⁶⁴⁷ *Watch* 283; *Hor.* 564.8-10 *sine fructu remansi, ac si penitus nullum effectum ipsum sacramentum in se haberet.*

⁶⁴⁸ See *Hor.* 569.25-26 *..si super hoc mentis duritia permissione divina emerserit, qui electos suos mille modis tribulare consuevit.*

to the *Horologium*, Suso's sincere concern for the weaknesses of spiritual life is seen in that *duritia* is in fact a hallmark of God's friends. As seen in Chapter One, the *amici Dei* is the category of the distinguished devotees who have chosen a life of true piety. It is also denotes those who reside among the saints and the martyrs in heaven. The hardness of heart and the seeming lack of effect from the Eucharist is thus in fact a hallmark of the friends of God. In the discussions of the *duritia* of hearts, the inability to perceive the sacrament, there is a direct connection to the issue of *tribulatio*. Whenever people still remain "hard of heart and cold in love" and do not "savor any taste of spiritual grace," despite all efforts of preparation and acts of piety, this is one of the "thousand ways" in which God is "accustomed to afflict his elect" (*...electos suos mille modis tribulare consuevit*). Lack of perceivable effect from the sacrament is in itself an effect, a gift from God, a sign of his presence and an opportunity to achieve merit. Through this state of *duritia* "the beloved soul" is "trained in the school of humility."⁶⁴⁹

Such hardness does often afflict the devout soul, and for many reasons and in many ways. The experts have said a lot about this, but let us ignore them; hold on to this one thing that whenever you do not find by careful self-examination that you have been the cause of this but that you have done your part, and that if such hardness of spirit is still present in you it is by God's permission, for he is accustomed to afflict his elect in a thousand different ways.⁶⁵⁰

In response to this *perceived* lack of effect and the hardness of heart and the inability to invest devotion, Suso engages a scholastic axiom that has been much commented on: the *facere quod in se est*.⁶⁵¹ Again, then, Suso points to the minimum requirements of preparation and faith; there is a clear *concentration* toward that which is profitable (*hoc solum teneas*). The many opinions of the experts are to be ignored.⁶⁵² The sacramental mediation requires an effort from the communi-

⁶⁴⁹ Watch 290; Hor. 570.5-6 ...*ut sic anima dilecta in humilitatis schola exercitetur*.

⁶⁵⁰ Watch 289; Hor 569.21-26 *Multis ex causis atque modis duritia talis animam devotam affligere consuevit, ut expertorum exstat sententia, quibus omnibus praetermissis, hoc solum teneas, ut quandocumque per diligentem inquisitionem te eidem causam dedisse non inveneris, sed quod tuum erat fecisti, si super hoc mentis duritia permissione divina emergerit, quo electos suos mille modis tribulare consuevit...*

⁶⁵¹ See Obermann (1983), pp. 132ff, who called this "The Golden Rule of Grace."

⁶⁵² *experuorum exstat sententia, quibus omnibus praetermissis...*

cant. However, it seems, to rely on human spiritual engagement is so problematic that Suso sees the need to point to a more fundamental pattern.⁶⁵³ The sufficient means (*quod tuum erat fecisti*) of preparation that are referred to here, the context shows, are the formal means of preparation such as sacramental confession and acts of piety.⁶⁵⁴ In addition, we see that the individual's conscious self-scrutiny is important; Suso appeals to the individual's morality, albeit on a level of minimum effort. In another passage from a previous part of this discussion, we see the same concentration toward the minimum requirements, and the *facere quod...* is even more explicit

Observe carefully that this sacrament of love was ordained as a remedy, and so, whenever man has done what he can to enable him to receive grace, that is enough (*quandocumque homo facit hoc, quod potest habilitando se ad gratiam, sufficit*). God does not demand from man what will seem to him impossible. So whenever a man receiving the sacrament does what he can, divine pity will supply through grace what he cannot attain without grace (*Quandocumque igitur suscipiens facit hoc, quod potest, divina pietas supplet per gratiam hoc, ad quod pervenire sine grata non potest*).⁶⁵⁵

While Suso stresses that devotion is important, at the same time he seeks to take the pressure away from weak communicants. This is achieved by asserting such devices of minimum requirement. Again, it is clearly the outer, standard elements of preparation that are implied here as the sufficient means.

What seemed at first to be an exclusive position according to which only the devout attain the fruits of the sacrament, turns out to be another fine-tuned way of integrating those who are struggling spiritually, the *indevoli*. This middle category of receivers, the *medio modo* is, in fact, expanded. It includes not only the lazy religious, but also those who are weak in devotion, who struggle to mobilize inner

⁶⁵³ Cf Thali (2009).

⁶⁵⁴ Watch 289 "Though they may recite their accustomed number of psalms and prayers, and cleanse themselves in the waters of confession, they still remain hard at heart..."; Hor. 569.12-13 *Et licet solitum numerum expleant psalmorum et orationum et se per confessionis lavacrum expurgent, corde tamen duro et affectu remanent frigido...*

⁶⁵⁵ Watch 287; Hor. 567.22-27 *Attende diligenter, quod hoc pietatis sacramentum est in remedium institutum; et ideo quandocumque homo facit hoc, quod potest habilitando se ad gratiam, sufficit. Nec requirit Deus ab homine hoc, quod sibi viderit impossibile esse. Quandocumque igitur suscipiens facit hoc, quod potest, divina pietas supplet per gratiam hoc, ad quod pervenire sine gratia non potest.*

affection and, and it is used to encourage a reliance on God's *pietas* and 'cooperative' grace.

We said before that Suso's Eucharist teaching is sacramental in comparison with some of his contemporaries. Here we see that his sacramentalism also includes the sacrament of penance; and this fundament is secured by a reference to a classic scholastic tenet of thought. When spirituality fails, there is a reliance on the institutional dimension. Berndt Hamm has outlined two primary tendencies within late medieval 'theology of piety'. In short: a sacramental line, a reliance on the hierarchy of the church, on the one hand, and an interiorized line, a reliance on immediacy with God in the human soul on the other.⁶⁵⁶ In the various passages we have considered in this part of our study of the 'fruits of the sacrament,' we find in a striking *combination* of both these tendencies.

"Therefore, out of all this, deduce how plain it is that this sacrament is not less true because its spiritual effect is invisible or imperceptible to the senses."⁶⁵⁷ Again, when Suso addresses this problem of *duritia* despite good intention, he encourages his audience by referring to faith's merits:

Do not let this break you, and do not for reason of this make any noticeable withdrawal from this saving sacrament, but know that very often God's love makes the soul safe in ways most secret and most trustworthy, when the soul relies solely on the support of faith, not propped up by any spiritual sweetness, not helped less than if it were abounding in the richness of spiritual charismata.⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵⁶ See, for instance Hamm (1999; 2009).

⁶⁵⁷ *Watch* 285; *Hor.* 565.10-12 *Igitur ex his patenter collige, quod hoc sacramentum non ideo minus verum est, quia spiritualis eius effectus invisibilis vel sensibiliter imperceptibilis est.*

⁶⁵⁸ *Watch* 289; *Hor* 569.26-570.4 *non te res haec frangat, nec te notabiliter huius rei causa a salutary hoc sacramento subtrahas, sciens quod divina pietas salute animae saepius secretissime et fidelissime operator, cum solo fidei subsidio anima innititur nec aliqua dulcedine spirituali fulcitur, non minus quam so prosperitate spiritualium charismatum afflueret, nec tamen in his se, prout oportet, caute teneret.*

Fear of the Sacrament. A Late Medieval Problem

The emphasis on devotion as a precondition for Eucharist celebration in this period was quite immense. As we said above, there is a tendency in this period to shift attention away from the issue of presence, from what was received, toward the receiver's disposition and worthiness.⁶⁵⁹ Devotion and worthiness as chief preconditions evidently put stress on people's inner life. This pressure certainly contributed to the peculiar problem that is seen in late medieval sources on the Eucharist, namely an intensified sense of awe, if not an outright *fear* of the sacrament.⁶⁶⁰ The Disciple exclaims: "Your presence sets my love violently on fire, but your majesty strikes fear in me."⁶⁶¹ On another occasion, he speaks of himself and all others who are struggling with insufficiency, and this is clearly connected with fear of unworthiness: "We who have little or no devotion ... do we not justly tremble to come to your altar in fear, lest perhaps what should bring us to pardon bring us instead to ruin?"⁶⁶²

Suso's Disciple puts to words a fear of the sacrament that was a growing problem in this period. More precisely, this is a fear of not being *worthy* to receive and hence of 'eating oneself to damnation'. This suggests an exaggerated type of fear. Suso often points to fear of the Lord as an important element of piety, in line with a long tradition.⁶⁶³ In healthy fear of the Lord the sinners regret their previous actions and fear punishment. For Suso a certain amount of fear must always be present, also when it comes to devotion to the sacrament. A good fear cultivates the essential virtue humility, and ideally fear and love accompany each other. This kind of fear (*timor* or *metu*) is a good fear, contrary to the type of scrupulous fear, *timor inordinatio*. It is this type of fear that keeps people in a paralyzed state and

⁶⁵⁹ See Macy (1999); Aris (2007).

⁶⁶⁰ See Mossman (2010).

⁶⁶¹ *Watch* 273; *Hor.* 554.24-25 *Tua praesentia meum vehementer accendit amorem; sed maiestas incutit timorem.*

⁶⁶² *Watch* 287; *Hor.* 567.17-19.

⁶⁶³ See, e.g., Bernstein (2000) for comments on this theme in a monastic tradition from John Cassian to Hildemar of Corbie. See also Knuuttila (2004).

away from the sacrament.⁶⁶⁴ In his Eucharist chapter Suso distinguishes between two ‘modes’ of fear, *timor* (or *metu*), and *timor inordinato*.

This is a basic distinction between a good kind of fear which makes people turn to penance and become acceptable to God, and a bad kind of fear which causes ‘paralysis’ and makes people stay away from the necessary sacraments. Inordinate fear (*timor indordinato*) and experiential certainty (i.e., ‘foretaste’ as seen above) are the extremes; within this pattern the less extreme points of reference, coordinates that define a good Eucharist piety, are awe (*metu*) and reverence (*reverentia*), on the one hand, and the confidence in the piety and mercy of God which is given in the sacrament on the other.⁶⁶⁵

Stephen Mossman formulates in a concise way some of Berndt Hamm’s important findings in his studies of ‘theology of piety’: In the pastoral theology in the later Middle Ages, we find severe preachers, but also traditions that sought to “ameliorate the burden of fear and emphasize the proximity and accessibility of grace.”⁶⁶⁶ Such efforts were direct responses to problems of religious insufficiency, scrupulosity and religious fear among the people that the ‘theologians of piety’ addressed. The theologians in question, Gerson, Savonarola, Staupitz or Paltz, demonstrate various strategies for conveying a ‘proximity of grace.’⁶⁶⁷ This could be done with an emphasis on the institutional mediation of grace, through sacraments or indulgences, or it could be accommodated by ways of inner immediacy, an interiorized access to God’s healing presence in mystically oriented theologians.⁶⁶⁸ Mossman has found the general model of Hamm, although developed through studies of sources from the late fifteenth century, to be useful for his own study of the works of Marquard von Lindau (d. 1392).⁶⁶⁹ That is to say, Mossman ‘extends’ the theory to include an earlier writer. This study has shown on several occasions that it is possible to extend such perspectives even further, so as to include Suso’s *Horologium*. This work, with its wide appeal and many strategies

⁶⁶⁴ See more on *timor inordinatio* and Suso’s approach to this problem below.

⁶⁶⁵ *Watch* 275 ; *Hor.* 556.29 *confisus de tanta pietate et clementia*.

⁶⁶⁶ Mossman (2010), p. 174.

⁶⁶⁷ See for instance Hamm (1999; 2004; 2010a).

⁶⁶⁸ Mossman (2010), pp. 174-75.

⁶⁶⁹ See comments in the introduction to this study.

of simplification, concentration and accommodation of theology directed to pious life and the ‘profits for salvation,’ demonstrates tenets that were important in the attempt to outline a ‘theology of piety’ in this period. The mentioned emphasis on the proximity of grace was, Mossman points to, particularly important when theologians had to deal with scrupulosity and, as for our theme in this chapter, a fear of the Eucharistic sacrament that is a peculiar part of religious life in the later Middle Ages.

Mossman shows that fear of the sacrament is among the most important issues in Marquard’s widely read *Eucharistietraktat*, written between 1370 and 1390.⁶⁷⁰ He shows that this problem is addressed in a number of other sources from the later fourteenth century, and he thus finds rich material for comparison.⁶⁷¹ One reason for this is most likely that the later fourteenth and early fifteenth century is a period where this problem of fear of the sacrament is most acute. However, as already said, this is also present in Suso’s *Horologium*. The sources used by Hamm, but also those used by Mossman are written too late for a comparison with the *Horologium* to be fruitful. However, such studies, as well as Sven Grosse’s work on Jean Gerson and the issue of *scrupulositas*,⁶⁷² can help us to obtain an overall idea of the spiritual climate and theological trends in the period more generally. Although such problems seem to have become more acute in the second half of the fourteenth century, many of their concerns are the same as is seen in the *Horologium*.

Whereas fear of the sacrament is a major issue in later sources, the problem is already mentioned, Mossman observes, by the thirteenth-century Franciscan mystic David of Augsburg.⁶⁷³ Fear of the sacrament is also mentioned in sermons by Suso’s contemporaries and fellow Dominican mystics Meister Eckhart and

⁶⁷⁰ See S. Mossman (2010) pp. 144-242; here p. 146.

⁶⁷¹ The problem of fear is echoed in the main source from the Devotio moderna, *Imitatio Christi*, Cf. Thomas Á Kempis (attr.), *Imitatio Christi IV; The Imitation of Christ*, ed. L. Sherley-Price (1978), p. 183. It is a central concern in the Eucharist theology of Jean Gerson. See Grosse (1994).

⁶⁷² Grosse (1994).

⁶⁷³ Mossman (2010 158-59).

John Tauler.⁶⁷⁴ The theme is not however, elaborated to the degree that we see in Suso Eucharist dialogue.

First we must establish some primary reasons for this particular problem. Why were people afraid of the Eucharist? We have already suggested that the pressure on devotion as a precondition for worthy communion was one reason for this. Behind it lays the fear of unworthy communion. People feared that if they approached and communicated without proper devotion, they did this unworthily and thus made themselves guilty of the death of Christ, as was formulated in Paul's letters to the Corinthians and repeated throughout the medieval period. One important source for this is the persistence of the idea of "Judaskommunion," that is of an unworthy communion which causes damnation.⁶⁷⁵ As a basis for this conception of eating oneself to judgment lies the biblical source, 1. Corinthians 11. 27: whoever celebrates without worthiness eats himself to damnation and makes himself guilty of the death of Christ. It was common to think that Judas was present at the institution of the last supper, and that his early death came as a consequence, as was stated by the influential Peter Lombard.⁶⁷⁶ The mortal sinner who received without having confessed his sins does as Judas did and, it was taught, would also have a similar fate.⁶⁷⁷ The idea of unworthy sacramental participation was horrifyingly elaborated in *exempla* used by preachers, which of course added to the problem of fear of the sacrament.⁶⁷⁸

A contributing factor to this fear of Judas Communion was the theologians' emphasis on the correct intention and on devotion as prerequisites for a worthy communion, on which has been commented. We have already pointed to Nicolaus of Lyra and his twelve conditions for a worthy communion, of which having the right intention is one. Most of these conditions listed by Nicholas of Lyra are formal, such as being a human being, being of a certain age, and so on. However,

⁶⁷⁴ See Tauler Sermon 33, ed. Hoffman p. 241; Eckhart, *RdU* 21.

⁶⁷⁵ Boeckl's (1924) comment on Johannes Tauler.

⁶⁷⁶ See Boeckl (1924), p. 109.

⁶⁷⁷ See Tauler, ed Vetter, p. 125.32, who relates unworthy communion directly to the fate of Judas.

⁶⁷⁸ See Tubach, *index exemplorum*, pp. 210-12, nos. 2674, 75, 78, 83. See also Mossman (2010), pp. 175-81.

his stance with regard to devotion entailed that those who lack it are not worthy to receive the sacramental food.⁶⁷⁹

Devotion was seen by many, including Suso, as a necessary prerequisite and condition for fruitful reception. With devotion or intention as a necessary prerequisite, however, it became difficult for people to discern if they were devout and thus worthy *enough*. This is again linked to a more general problem of religious uncertainty and fear of sin and of afterlife punishments in this period. Another factor that is likely to have contributed to such sentiments is the cult that had surrounded the sacrament since the later thirteenth century and, hence, the growing exclusivity of the celebration.⁶⁸⁰

In line with this, we may also recall the massive emphasis on the ideas of transubstantiation and the real presence, causing the moment of consecration to become dramatic and frightening. Sven Grosse notes that fear of the sacrament was in fact a bigger problem, as seen in his sources, than fear in relation to the sacrament of penance.⁶⁸¹ Whereas faith in the Eucharistic presence and in the revealed truths of Christianity was certain in an objective sense, the state of one's own worthiness was not. Confessing one's faith in the present Christ in the sacrament thus also entailed by its nature a doctrinal *uncertainty* of salvation.

Fear of the Eucharistic sacrament, Grosse claims, was related in particular to the moment of consecration. At the point when the priest spoke the words of consecration and elevated the host—the moment of transubstantiation—there was thought to be no turning back for the unprepared sinner. As even *seeing* the sacramental host was seen as a form of partaking and receiving, merely seeing a host without the right preconditions was potentially sufficient for damnation.⁶⁸²

⁶⁷⁹ *Sic etiam si quis devocionis caret ardore, dingus non est ad sumedum cibum sacramentalem*. The formulation in Lyra's *Dicta de sacramento* is cited in Mossman (2010), p. 159.

⁶⁸⁰ When discussing this topic as seen in Marquard von Lindau's *Eucharistietraktat* (1370-90) Stephen Mossman also points to strengthened sacramental cult in Marquard's lifetime, that is, a few generations later than Suso. But again, the tendency of exclusivity was already at hand in Suso's time. Cf. Mossman, (2010), p. 146; See Fenten (2007b), p. 40 with references. See also A. Willing, (2004), pp. 176-77.

⁶⁸¹ Grosse (1994), p. 201, and *passim*.

⁶⁸² See Grosse (1994).

Let us turn to Suso again. Indeed, we find that also he maintains the idea that unworthy communion leads to damnation. The *omnino indispositi*, the “wholly ill-disposed,” it is said, “deserve death in eternity and cursing on this earth”.⁶⁸³ However, this is all Suso has to say about that category of recipients. Compared to the numerous exempla and sermons that outlined the prospects for the unworthy communicants in the most terrifying way, Suso’s words on this point are scarce.⁶⁸⁴ This scarcity is arguably a conscious effort to *reduce* this category to a formal matter of not having confessed mortal sins, and thus to “take the category [of unworthiness] out of action,” as Mossman formulates it when he comments on the same tendency in the work of Marquard.⁶⁸⁵ As seen in the treatment of ‘fruitless’ communion (*sine grata*), a consequence of Suso’s position is that communion without devotion is *not* associated with unworthiness, unlike what was often taught and believed about ‘judaskommunion.’ It is possible, according to Suso, to communicate without devotion and still be within the category of relative worthiness. The communicant who does not feel devout should not because of that fear for his own worthiness. We said that Suso encourages positively a minimum effort of emotional involvement; he clears a space from where to depart by asserting the option of receiving dry bread. Dry bread, after all, is not dangerous (at least not in the short term). We saw that unworthy communion, in a formal sense, is restricted to mean simply communion in mortal sin (*criminalibus involuti*).

Suso’s strategy of detaching the issue of worthiness from that of devotion may be seen in light of a broader tendency in this period’s popularized theology of counteracting the problem of fear of unworthiness, and also of giving theology a push in the direction of accessibility of grace.⁶⁸⁶

One of the strategies of relief from fear can be seen in that the mid category, the unprepared recipients, are not associated with unworthiness. This has already been pointed to. Unlike Tauler, the *Horologium* holds a position that does not reject un-devout communion, but instead focuses attention to the state of lacking

⁶⁸³ *Watch* 286; *Hor.* 566.8 *merentur aeternam mortem et temporalem maledictionem*

⁶⁸⁴ See Mossman (2010).

⁶⁸⁵ Mossmann (2010), p. 170. See above.

⁶⁸⁶ See Mossmann (2010).

or weak devotion and encourages people to rely on their faith. In this way, the weight of unworthiness is taken of the un-devout, and it is likely that the problems of fear of the sacraments was the reason for this way of presenting the issue.

One key source of uncertainty and fear was related to the difficulty, or, in fact, the impossibility, of discerning one's own state before God. This concept of uncertainty is repeated throughout medieval theology: that we do not know our own state before God, whether we are in a state of grace or if we deserve damnation.⁶⁸⁷

O eternal God, how terrible it is to me and to sinners like me to hear this! (...) We who have little or no devotion, who are not even contrite as we should be for all that we are neglecting, do we not justly tremble to come to your altar in fear, lest perhaps what should bring us to pardon bring us to ruin?⁶⁸⁸

Suso definitely regards these steps as merely beginnings. *Solo fidei*, thus articulates faith as sufficient and certain, but *with regard to the first step*, of a renewed, personally reformed spiritual path.

As was seen above, Suso makes use of elements of thought from scholastic theology when he feels the need to; for instance, it was seen, the much-used scholastic axiom *facere quod in se est* is used, we saw, in order to take pressure off of the *indevoli*.⁶⁸⁹ The *facere quod* can also be seen as a strategy to ameliorate the accessibility of grace for scrupulous communicants.⁶⁹⁰

...you should rather go to the altar trusting in divine pity than stay away from it through considering your own frailty. Does a sick man not hurry to the doctor?⁶⁹¹

⁶⁸⁷ Grosse (1994).

⁶⁸⁸ *Hor* 567.11-12;17-21 *O Deus aeternae, quam terribile est mihi meisque similibus peccatoribus hoc audire (...) Qui parum vel nihil devotionis habemus, nec de ipsis quidem negligentibus nostris, prout oportet, compungimur? Cum quanta nobis formidine merito est accedendum et timendum, ne forte hoc, quod deberet cedere ad veniam, cedat ad ruinam.*

⁶⁸⁹ St. Thomas *STh* I-II, q. 109, a. 6, ad 2.; Künzle (1977), p. 567 with further references.

⁶⁹⁰ Cf. Mossman (2010), p. 172 with further reference.

⁶⁹¹ *Watch* 287; *Hor.* 567.22-568.2 *Attende diligenter, quod hoc pietatis sacramentum est in remedium institutum; et ideo quandocumque homo facit hoc, quod potest habilitando se ad gratiam, sufficit. Ne recurrit Deus ab homine hoc, quod sibi viderit impossibile esse. Quandocumque igitur suscipiens facit hoc, quod potest, divina pietas supplet per gratiam hoc, ad quod pervenire sine grata non potest. Et ideo ceteris paribus potius est accedendum ex confidentia divinae pietatis, quam ex consideratione propriae fragilitatis abstinendum, quamvis utrumque pro*

In an attempt to deal with the problem of fear, and thus referring to a ‘model of cooperation’ between the person that does his best, and God who with his *pietas* has chosen to help man out of his misery, by way of this sacrament.⁶⁹²

A final aspect of Suso’s effort to counteract fear: the lenient side of God; he is present in his majesty indeed, but never as a judge. Most emphasis is on Christ’s humanity, a brother friend, and even a spouse. God’s presence in the Sacrament of Love is a *mild* presence. Suso engages to counteract fear by emphasizing the lenient ‘side’ of Christ’s presence—as a “brother and friend,” even as a spouse.⁶⁹³ It is characteristic of Suso’s Eucharist understanding that the presence of Christ in the sacrament is a total presence. He is not present as the passionate Christ, simply, but as all his possible roles. This illustrates an important point; the sacrament contains the *whole* of Christ, and thus also Christ in various roles, the divine majesty and the brother and friend, the human Christ. “I have found my beloved, not only as he is in his divinity, ruling over all, but also as he is in his humanity, sacramentally present.”⁶⁹⁴

Even if it is stressed that Christ is present in all his ways, as both “God and man”; and that his characteristic two ‘sides,’ the majestic fear striking divinity and the loving, kind humanity; it is the latter which receives emphasis. God is indeed present in the sacrament in his majesty, and the idea of ‘Judas communion’ also implies a certain element of a judging, discerning presence, but this element is downplayed. The emphasis is on his presence, “not only as he is in his divinity, ruling over all, but also as he is in his humanity, sacramentally present.”

The Eucharist is above all the ‘Sacrament of Love-’ This can be seen also in the many references to God’s mercy or clemency (*pietas, pietatis..*) in association with the sacramental presence and fruits. Another name given to the sacrament is *sacramentum pietatis*, “this sacrament of piety (was instituted as a remedy).”⁶⁹⁵

loco et tempore reddator commendabile. Nonne aegrotus festinat ad medicum et pauper divitis pulsatur ad ostium?

⁶⁹² For the term modell of cooperation, see Hamm (2009).

⁶⁹³ Watch 273; Hor. 554.26-28.

⁶⁹⁴ Watch 272; Hor. 553.30-554.2 ...*quia inveni dilectum meum non solum secundum divinitatem omnibus praesidentem, sed et secundum humanitatem sacramentaliter praesentem.*

⁶⁹⁵ Watch 287; Hor. 567.22.

Pietas is used to describe the heavenly spirits in relation to the sacrament,⁶⁹⁶ but most often *pietas* means the *pietas Dei*, the mercy, love, or pity of God by which he is accessible to humans through the sacrament.⁶⁹⁷ The *divina pietas*, it is asserted, makes souls safe in secret ways, and God is referred to as *Medicus* and *piissimus distributor* (through the Sacrament).⁶⁹⁸

Fountain of mercy, Lord to the poor, Shepherd for sheep, Physician for the sick; In his usual abundant style Suso combines a number of figures of speech that serve to incite confidence and underline the need for God's grace. He often returns to a common interpretation of the sacrament as a remedy for the sick, an idea which is found also in the Eucharist writings of Thomas Aquinas.⁶⁹⁹

All Are Unworthy

It was clearly a difficult balance to combat the worst fear and, at the same time, to maintain the appropriate awe of the sacrament. Considering the immense divine presence in the sacrament,⁷⁰⁰ Suso's anxious Disciple asks a pertinent question: "[who] will be able to prepare himself with true worthiness for such mysteries?"⁷⁰¹

In one of the crucial passages that addresses unworthiness and fear of approaching the altar, we read in the words of Eternal Wisdom:

There has not risen among men born of women" (Mt 11.11) anyone who out of his own power and the justice of his works could prepare himself sufficiently to receive me with true worthiness, even if there were one man with the natural purity of all the angels with the cleanliness and brightness of all of them together, and with the merits of all men living on earth in austerity of life. All the divine grace of all of these reckoned up together could make no one fitting enough to receive such mysteries.⁷⁰²

⁶⁹⁶ *Watch* 287; *Hor.* 567.26; 28.

⁶⁹⁷ *Watch* 287; *Hor.* 556.29.

⁶⁹⁸ *Watch* 287; *Hor.* 568.3.

⁶⁹⁹ *Watch* 287; *Hor.* 567.22-23

⁷⁰⁰ Cf. Boeckl on Tauler (1924), p.109

⁷⁰¹ *Watch* 286; *Hor.* 567.2-3 *Quis igitur, 'natus de muliere,' se condigne ad tanta mysteria poterit praeparare?*

⁷⁰² *Watch* 286-87; *Hor.* 567.4-7 *Inter natos mulierum non surrexit qui ex sola virtute et iustitia operum suorum tamquam ex condigno se sufficienter praeparare possit, etiam si unus homo haberet naturalem omnium angelorum puritatem et omnium comprehensorum munditiam et*

This may seem as a relentless teaching, in light of the strategies to counteract fear that we have just seen. We said above that Suso reduced the issue of unworthiness to a matter of un-confessed sins. As was seen, confession as Eucharist preparation makes a formal distinction between worthy and unworthy, and a reliance on the sacrament of penitence to ensure a secure state of preparedness.⁷⁰³ This passage intensifies unworthiness and makes it into a ‘total’ category. Importantly, this is another type of unworthiness, or, to say it with Sven Grosse, it is an ‘unworthiness of a higher degree’. Importantly, this is not the type of formal unworthiness that is associated with Judas communion. By stressing unworthiness in a total sense, Suso directs attention away from the individual sinner’s transgressions and hence tries to neutralize the fear of being among the first of the three types of recipients. Although one must be *formally* prepared, it is simply not possible, “out of virtue and out of one’s own works,” to become properly prepared and sufficiently worthy (*dignus, condignus*). Again, we encounter a tendency that we commented upon earlier, namely an intensification of unworthiness and insufficiency of humans works. This has been observed as a trend among late medieval preachers.⁷⁰⁴ Notice that he says that there is no one “who *out of his own power and the justice of his works* [emphasis added] could prepared himself sufficiently to receive me with true worthiness.” A main solution to the problem of fear of unworthiness, then, is to turn the whole problem inside out by redefining the concept of unworthiness.⁷⁰⁵ In doing this, Suso, in fact, neutralizes the fear problem; the question of *formal* worthiness or not becomes less pressing. To be fully prepared is, from such a perspective, simply impossible; hence, the only recourse is reliance on God’s *pietas*. Once again, we observe the importance of what has been called the ‘golden rule of grace’, the *facere quod in se est* axiom. The idea is used to form a secure basis, in fact an automatism of the sacrament and its formal preparations. Together with the emphasis on total unworthiness, proper humility and

claritatem, omniumque viatorum merita per vitae austeritatem. Ex his omnibus circumscripta divina gratia non fieri satis idoneus ad percipienda tanta mysteria.

⁷⁰³ Watch 286; Hor. 566.16-17 *Si vere conteritur et consilio spiritualium utitur medicorum, iam proprie loquendo peccator non est.*

⁷⁰⁴ See Zumkeller (1959). See above.

⁷⁰⁵ See Watch 287-88; Hor. 567.4-10; cf. 567.22-568.5.

awe is ensured. With awareness of this ‘unworthiness of a higher degree’, Eternal Wisdom calls on the Disciple to approach the sacrament:

... with due reverence and especial honor, “running to meet your God,” be filled with humble devotion and wonder that so great a lord deigns to come to so poor a servant, such nobility to a wretched little worm, so much majesty to a vile leper, and say with fear and respect: “‘Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof,’ but, confident in such love and pity, ‘come sick to the Physician of life,’ thirsty to the fountain of mercy, ‘poor to the Lord of heaven and earth,’ a sheep to the Shepherd, the image to its Creator, desolate to my loving consoler and liberator.”⁷⁰⁶

We see the opposites that are encountered so often in late medieval theology and mysticism: the absolute lowliness and unworthiness of man on the one hand, and the absolute merciful savior on the other. Of fundamental importance is the ‘model of cooperation’ between God and humans,⁷⁰⁷ not only on a higher level, in the sense that she who invests devotion attains *suavitas*, but also on a basic level of ‘minimum requirement.’

Suso emphasizes that he who has done what is in his power to prepare himself, is supplied with ‘the rest.’ This cooperation model, we observe, is presented as a direct solution to the problem of fear of the sacrament.⁷⁰⁸

Fear, in the ‘good sense,’ should be maintained (“say with fear and respect...”). However, we also see that Suso is quick to add *confidence* in the Eucharist as a ‘fountain of mercy,’ a point of accessing the immense grace of God, which, in the sacrament, is very near. In a peculiar way, devotion is at once encouraged and neutralized as a factor of Eucharist piety. Suso’s inversion of the

⁷⁰⁶ *Watch* 291-92; *Hor.* 556.24-557.4 *Deinde cum reverentia debita et honore praecipuo occurrens Deo tuo, devotione quadam humili mirare, quod tantus dominus ad tantillum servum et tanta nobilitas ad miserum vermiculum et et maiestas tanta ad vilem leprosum dignatur venire; et dic cum metu et reverentia: “Domine, non sum dignus, ut intres sub tectum meum [Mt 8.8], sed confisus de tanta pietate et clementia accedo infirmus ad medicum vitae, sitiens ad fontem misericordiae ... ovis ad pastorem, figmentum ad suum creatorem, desolatus ad meum pium consolatorem ac liberatorem.*

⁷⁰⁷ See Hamm (2009), p. 46 with further references.

⁷⁰⁸ See *Watch* 287 “So whenever a man receiving the sacrament does what he can, divine pity will supply through grace what he cannot attain without grace.” *Hor.* 567.25-27 *Quandocumque igitur suscipiens facit hoc, quod potest, divina pietatis supplet per gratia hoc, ad quod pervenire sine gratia non potest.*

formerly used category of unworthiness functions as a relief for troubled minds, another strategy against fear, and a way to ensure a humble attitude toward the sacramental presence.

A solution to fear and spiritual deficiency is to make this into an absolute deficiency on a deeper level, and thus lead the attention *extra nos*, to the rescuing force that God provides through the sacrament when the minimum requirements are met. As it is so difficult to invest emotionally in the event, because of *duritia* of heart or disturbance out of fear, a solution given by Suso is actually a reliance on a 'sacramental automatism' and the mediation of the institution and the power of the sacrament in its 'outer' form.

This is not to say that devotion is crucial. However, to repeat what has been said before, when spirituality fails (and this seems to have been widespread), a secure basis must be available, and this is the 'golden rule of grace'; "And therefore, when you have done what you are capable of (*Quapropter cum feceris, quod in te est, accede secure.*), come up in confidence (*accede secure*) with no trepidation, in faith and love, never doubting his loving kindness."⁷⁰⁹

Again, *secure* is possible here because this is a certainty of faith, that is, a secure reliance on the truths of faith, which by extension applies to the real presence, as we saw. God's *pietas*, mediated through the presence of Christ in the sacrament, and the *devotio* of human believers, with which they meet Christ and merge with Him, provides the coordinates in a structure of cooperation.⁷¹⁰

A Prayer to the Sacrament / Summary

At the very end of Suso's Eucharist dialogue, a short prayer is inserted. It is voiced by the Disciple, and is to be said during Eucharist rite. This prayer, like Suso's chapters on Hell and Heaven which we shall comment on in Chapter Three, is an example of parts of the *Horologium* that had a separate reception history. It was,

⁷⁰⁹ *Watch* 288; *Hor.* 568.22-23.

⁷¹⁰ Sometimes expressed as the "partim partim," see Oberman (1992), p. 215. See also Hamm (2009).

for instance, translated and incorporated into a Middle English treatise by Nicolas Love.⁷¹¹

Suso's Eucharist prayer contains most of the elements of Eucharistic devotion that Suso tries to accommodate throughout this chapter. It may help us sum up the main elements of his teaching. Suso's prayer deserves to be quoted in full:

Hail, most holy body of the Lord, contained in this sacrament. I acknowledge you with my lips, I love you with all my heart, I long for you with all that is within me. Deign, I beg, today to look on this sick soul, longing to receive you, saving victim and fount of all graces, so mercifully and graciously that it may rejoice to have found from your presence healing for body and for soul. Do not look, Lord, on my many iniquities and neglects, but on your infinite mercies. For it is you through whom the whole earth has been created and healed, through whom all plants and all things that are strong derive their strength, You are that immaculate Lamb who are today sacrificed to the eternal Father for the redemption of the whole world. O sweetest manna, a most soothing nectar, give to my mouth the honeyed taste of your saving presence. Kindle your love in me, extinguish my vices, pour into me strength, increase your graces, give me health of mind and body. 'Bow down your heavens,' I beg, 'and descend' [Ps 143.5] to me, so that, joined and united to you, I may be always made one spirit with you. O venerable sacrament, let all my enemies, I implore, be driven off by you, all my sins be forgiven, and all evils be shut out by your presence. Give me good intentions, amend my way of life and direct all my actions in your will. Let my understanding now be enlightened by a new light through you, sweetest Jesus, let my love be set on fire, let my hope be strengthened, so that my reformed life may always lead me to better things, and in the end permit me a blessed death.⁷¹²

⁷¹¹ Love's rendering of Suso's prayer is based on the Middle English translation of the *Horologium*. Zeeman (1958).

⁷¹² *Watch* 291-92; *Hor.* 571.27-572.20 *Ave sanctissimum corpus dominicum in hoc sacramento contentum. Te confiteor labiis, te toto corde diligo, te totis visceribus concupisco. Dignare, quaeso, hodie infirmam animam te salutarem victimam et fontem omnium gratiarum recipere cupientem tam clementer et gratiose invisere, ut medelam in corpore et in anima, tua ex praesentia gaudeam invenisse. Ne respicias, domine, ad iniquitates et neglegentias meas plurimasm sed ad miserationes tuas infinitas. Tu namque es, per quem orbis terrae est creatus et sanatus, per quem omnes herbare et cunctae res virtuosae suas sortiuntur virtutes. Tu es agnus ille immaculatus, qui hodie pro totius mundi redemptione Patri aeterno victimaris. O manna dulcissimum. O nectar suavissimum, vonfer orimeo tuae salutaris praesentiae mellifluum gustum. Accende in me caritatem tuam, exstingue vitia, virtutes infunde, gratias adauge, salutem mentis et corporis tribue. 'Inclina,' quaeso, 'caelos tuos et descende' ad me, ut tibi coniunctus et unitus tecum pariter unus efficiar spiritus. O venerabile sacramentum, per te, quaeso, omnes inimici mei repellantur, peccata dimittantur, et omnia mama per tuam praesentiam excludantur. Bonum propositum tribue, mores corrige et omnes actus meos in tua voluntate dispone. Intellectus per te, Iesu dulcissime, hic novo lumine illustretur, affectus inflammetur, spes roboretur, ut vita mea emendata semper proficiat in melius, et tandem conferatur exitus beatus.*

Although it is difficult to prove, it is reasonable to assume that this prayer was written with this type of circulation as a separate piece of personal literature in mind.

We see that the prayer is designed for the actual situation of communion. Suso's prayer is an example of a handy, practically oriented 'Small literature,'⁷¹³ and we might imagine that people would have such prayers written down and carried with them.

In the prayer we see again a tendency of comprising and simplifying the most essential theological elements that are needed in order that a correct *awareness* of the presence is at hand. It contains many of the standard elements of Eucharist thought that we have seen earlier; the main tenets of this teaching are expressed in a simple way. There is emphasis on the fruits of the sacrament, which are many and quite concrete. They pertain to all aspects of life. It is healing medicine to the sick, a motive to which Suso often returns in the preceding dialogue.⁷¹⁴

The sacrament is all-encompassing, its fruits concern all aspects of life, and also the entire life span; the prayer to the sacrament is also a prayer for persistence to the end, a desire to remain within the dominion of God's grace, until the moment of death.

This prayer functions as a device for concentration and devotion; it accommodates an inner, intensified form of Eucharist piety which functions for all the possible categories of audience that we may imagine for this book. Concentration, driving out externals and disturbing factors and focusing on the sacrament is a main task.

We find here a quite "mainstream" Churchly interpretation of the Eucharist. The motive of sacrifice, here with reference to Christ as the sacrificial lamb is emphasized. In addition, the motive of *creation* is clearly present. These were standard motives related to the Eucharist. The mixture of motives reflects the complex symbolic pattern surrounding the rite and its theology. However, again, a

⁷¹³ Cf. Hamm (1999), p. 15.

⁷¹⁴ See, e.g., *Watch* 287; *Hor.* 567.22-23; 568.3.

crucial motive of Churchly Eucharist teaching is *not* seen: the Holy Sacrament as a communion of the faithful, the souls in purgatory, and God's heavenly court.⁷¹⁵ The piety that this prayer accommodates is one of a profoundly *personalized*.

With it Suso sought to aid the individual in the actual situation of communion. Whereas the sacrament is a monumental medium of grace, it could for various reasons that we have seen, be difficult to access. The prayer functions as an aid in this respect, a secondary 'medium of assistance', that helps the individual to become susceptible to the primary 'medium of presence.'⁷¹⁶ If used during the rite, such personal prayers help to intensify and heighten the attention of the person, and also the objective effect of the sacrament.⁷¹⁷ We clearly see that the prayer of Suso is intended for the actual situation.

Johanna Thali has commented on prayers in this particular period and points to Johannes Tauler, for whom 'outer' prayer with the lips was disturbing to the inner prayer of the heart. Suso, in this light, demonstrates an opposite strategy. He accommodates a piety that involves prayer of the lips, and beyond that, in fact the whole body, the whole mind, and the whole of one's life: "... the mind applauds, the eyes sparkle; with the hands stretched out, the eyes lifted." Stretching out the hands, are outer gestures of 'opening the heart', that are seen to strengthen the inner susceptibility to God's graces.⁷¹⁸ It is fully in line with the effort in the *Horologium* of providing "something easy"; prayers, devotion to the name of Jesus, gestures of piety, to encourage a total involvement in the 'elements of piety.'⁷¹⁹

A dominating motive in the prayer is also the penitent attitude, which was seen above. The prayer repeats the characteristic attitude of inner personal confession in immediacy to God.⁷²⁰ The communicant is supposed to remember and

⁷¹⁵ See above, pp. 145-46.

⁷¹⁶ See Hamm (2009); Thali (2009).

⁷¹⁷ See Thali (2009), p. 253.

⁷¹⁸ See Hamm (2004), p. 107. See also Chapter One, pp. 69-73.

⁷¹⁹ See comments on *Horologium* chapter seven in the introduction to this study.

⁷²⁰ See above, pp. 133-37.

confess his or her own unworthiness and need for the salutary gifts, the necessary ‘means for Salvation.’⁷²¹

To recall yet another element that we have seen above, the prayer is seen to suggest an attitude of a piety of *descent*, where the main emphasis lies on the low and needy human, and Christ’s deigning into the human heart.⁷²² Suso’s quote from the Psalms expresses a longing for this descent, which is made possible through a union of man and Christ that occurs in the sacrament.

In this prayer, then, Suso concludes many of the features that he introduces when addressing the *medio modo* believers, those who are struggling with inadequacies and perhaps fear of the sacrament. His shift from a high mysticism to an emphasis on the unworthiness of all is in line with the typical penitential attitude of this period.

To conclude, we see in this prayer the richness and expressiveness of Suso’s style as a theologian of piety. Seen together, the fruits are all encompassing and affect the whole of life. The prayer contains something for everyone. It is another aid for the weak; at the same time the ‘Alpinists’ among his audience would recognize the inner intensity and rapture that is also suggested.

⁷²¹ See also *Bdew* 303.8-9 *Herr, bin ich din nit wirdig, so bin ich din aber notdürftig. ... Herr, mit einem einigen worte macht du min siechen sele gesunt machen. Exemplar* 285.

⁷²² See above, p. 155n.

Chapter Three: Death and the Afterlife

Throughout this study we have explored some main elements of piety in the *Horologium*: the ideal of sustaining hardships, *tribulatio* or *adversitas*, a main theme in Book I, and Eucharist devotion and thinking and practice connection with this sacrament. In the final chapter of this study we shall turn to another key theme in Suso's work, which is treated in the first part of Book II, namely *death and death preparation*. In the second chapter of Book II, the Disciple is confronted in his imagination with an intense vision of a young man who is struggling on his deathbed. This man is, emphatically, dying an *unprepared death*. Through dialogue with this man and by witnessing his final deathbed struggles, the Disciple (and the reader) is taught about death and the importance of preparing for death in life.

Suso's visionary dialogue on unprepared death can be seen as part of a new type of literature that emerged in this period, the so-called *Ars moriendi* literature. As is widely agreed, Suso's text not only counts among this group, but it was an innovative contribution that made a strong impact on later literary development. Like his chapter on the Eucharist, Suso's 'death book' is an example of parts of the *Horologium* that circulated independently from the main work, which indicates the strong impact this text must have had. It survives not only in separate fragments, but also as incorporation in later works. For instance, the *Bdew* version of the text appeared as a part of Marquard von Lindau's widely read *Dekalogerklärung*, "Book on the Ten Commandments."⁷²³ Such diffusion strongly suggests that Suso, with this vision of a horrible death, struck a nerve in the religious culture of this time.

As can be seen in a recent study by Berndt Hamm, the *Ars moriendi* books are of different types and provide a variation of approaches to the 'problem of

⁷²³ See Haas (1996), p. 223, with further references.

death.⁷²⁴ What all these approaches have in common, however, is an intense fixation on the *moment of death*. Suso's text is perhaps the best example of this, but the well-known *Bilder ars*, with its series of images of man on his deathbed surrounded by tempting demons and protecting saints, display the same fixation. Why did the moment of death become so important in this particular period?

The answer to this must be sought in the thematic complex that surrounds death in this period, namely the elaborate ideas of the afterlife. Jaques Le Goff, in his seminal work *The Birth of Purgatory*, has given valuable insight into the theoretical development and pious culture that were connected with the tenacious idea of purgation of souls. The idea, or better, the ideas, of Purgatory, Le Goff asserted, strongly influenced the thinking about death in this period. As the title of this chapter promises, we shall consider not only Suso's teaching on death and death preparation, but also the ideas of the afterlife that were 'attached' to the idea of death in important ways. We shall begin by exploring some of the visions of the afterlife that are found in Book I of the *Horologium*, before we proceed with a close study of the visionary dialogue about death. As we approach the main text, the vision of the dying man, we shall discuss Suso's ideas about unprepared death and his teaching on death preparation. We shall also comment on what we shall call 'rudiments' of and *Ars moriendi* 'proper', that is to say, instructions for the actual deathbed situations as seen in the final part of Suso's dialogue.

Toward the end of this chapter we shall return to a theme that has been discussed on several occasions throughout this study, namely the *Horologium* and mysticism. Through comparisons with the *Bdew*, Suso's teaching on death and on the afterlife in the *Horologium* shall give us opportunities to continue our discussion of the mystical profile of this work and to see this in light of previous research on Suso.

⁷²⁴ Hamm (2007a).

Visions of the Afterlife in *Horologium sapientiae*

In medieval literature, death is often expressed as a new birth.⁷²⁵ According to the fundamentally dualistic understanding of humans in the Middle Ages, death was the moment when the soul finally departed from the body and entered into the ‘next worlds.’⁷²⁶ Death was one of the *novissima*, the “Last Things.”

With typical intensity and expressiveness, Suso’s vision of the dying man demonstrates how death is an initiation into the next worlds just as much as an end to life on earth, and that the next worlds could be immensely terrifying. The man is portrayed in a most extreme situation of deathbed agony, at the brink of departure, and the text gives short but powerful glimpses of the forces that are pressing on (demonic figures of Hell, the intense flames of purgatory and the wrathful God-judge) and these mental images naturally make his death a very difficult matter.

Hence, in medieval thought it was never questioned whether there was a life after death.⁷²⁷ the question was *what kind* of afterlife one would have. The various aspects of the Afterlife were pressing issues throughout the Middle Ages. *De novissimis*, “On the Last Things,” was a much-used headline in scholarly works,⁷²⁸ which tried to establish such matters theoretically; visionary and hagiographic literature abounds in afterlife portrayals,⁷²⁹ journeys to the other worlds, literary and iconographic displays of Afterlife torment or heavenly bliss, as seen in apparitions of departed souls in various afterlife situations to the living. For instance, the souls of departed family members or friends who had been saved could appear

⁷²⁵ See Suso’s Letter VI, in the *Briefbuchlein*, *Exemplar* 350 “And physical death can well be called a new birth, because of the release from an onerous body and because one enters unencumbered into eternal blessedness.” *Bfb* 380.1-2 *So mag aber der liplich tod wol heissen ein nûwu gebürt von dez sweren libes abval, von dem frien ingang in die ewigen selikeit*. See also W. Rehm (1928), p. 95; Grosse (1994), p. 215; Haas (1989b), pp. 31-35.

⁷²⁶ See Angenendt (2004), p. 107; Dinzelbacher (1999), p. 49-50; Ohler (2003), p. 71. All with further references.

⁷²⁷ See Grosse (1994), p. 215.

⁷²⁸ Le Goff (1984), p. 241.

⁷²⁹ On visions in medieval literature in general, see Dinzelbacher (1981). For comments on visions in Suso’s works see Haas (1996), esp. pp. 194-5; see also Fenten (2007b), pp. 113-17.

to the living and reassure them that their prayers had been effective.⁷³⁰ Informed by such apparitions and in constant communication with the dead, religious life was, in a variety of ways, shaped by thoughts of the Afterlife; suffrages, indulgences, deathbed rituals, were essential parts of religious life.

A particularly strong preoccupation with eschatology is seen in fourteenth and fifteenth-century art literature and preaching. From this period, a more or less fixed combination of the “Four Last Things” (*Quattor novissima*) is the subject of devotional treatises, for instance in Gerhard von Vliedervoven’s *Cordiale de quattor novissimis* (c. 1380) or in later works with a similar pattern.⁷³¹ In Suso’s *Horologium*, we observe that Hell and Heaven are treated consecutively in Book I (10-11), and we also find the expression *novissima*,⁷³² but these four elements are not treated together. The four Last things, Death, Judgment, Hell, and Heaven, are nevertheless strongly present in the *Horologium*.⁷³³

The Afterlife is present not only in the separate sections upon which we shall soon comment, but it develops the mental horizon throughout the book. In Chapter One we discussed Suso’s extensive use of the idea of *tribulatio* as an ‘instrument’ for giving shape to an internalized morally refinement piety of identification with Christ. That part of our study demonstrated that *tribulatio* as an ‘element of piety’ is closely connected to eschatology in the sense that endurance of hardship in life is seen to mitigate the judge and to shorten purgatorial punish-

⁷³⁰ See Le Goff (1984), p. 294; 303-4. In chapter 6 of the *Vita* we are told how the Servant experienced many visions of “future and hidden things.” Through these, and Suso adds “to the extent this is possible,” he learned “(...) what heaven, hell and purgatory are like. It was quite usual that souls would appear to him when they had departed this world, telling him how things had gone for them, how they had earned their punishment, and how one might help them, or what their reward from God was like.” *Exemplar* 74-75; *Vita* 22.23-27 *wie es in himelrich und in helle und in vegfür stunde. Es waz im gewonlich, daz vil selen im vor erscheinen, so sū von diser welt geschieden, und im kund taten, wie es in ergangen weri, wa mit sū ir būsse hetin verschuldet und wa mit man in gehelfen möhte, oder wie ir lon vor got weri.* For relevant comments on the effectiveness of prayers and actions on behalf of the dead, see Bynum (1995), pp. 280-81.

⁷³¹ For instance in Gerhard von Vliedervoven’s *Cordiale de quattor novissimis* (c. 1380) or in later works with a similar pattern. Sigurd Hjelde (2010) notes that the *novissima* are not really ‘things’ at all, and that this is merely a weak translation. Rather, they are *states* or, to some extent, *places*, that the soul goes to after death.

⁷³² *Watch* 257; *Hor.* 540.2-3.

⁷³³ See Byn (1981).

ment in the next.⁷³⁴ In this part, we will return to the ideas of Purgatory in the *Horologium*. We will see that in addition to the mentioned *novissima*, the concept of *Purgatory*⁷³⁵ becomes acute in the final parts of the vision of the dying man.

To get an elaborate idea of the eschatology in the *Horologium*, we will now call attention to his visions of Hell (I, 10) and a vision of God as a *iudex iratus*, an “angry judge” (I, 7).

A Vision of Hell (*Horologium* I, 10)

Suso’s vision of Hell is one of the parts of the *Horologium* that is significantly expanded compared to the first version in the *Bdew*. This, we must assume, means that he found the issue important and worthy of further attention. As for the reception of Suso’s works, it is also interesting to notice that this is one of the parts which circulated separately from the *Horologium* and which was extensively copied as single piece or diffused together with the following chapter on “The joys of Highest Heaven.”⁷³⁶

With the “eyes of faith” (*fidei oculis*),⁷³⁷ Disciple sees a *regio umbrosa*, a shadowy place that he does not at first recognize. Then, to educate the Disciple and the reader, the vision is expounded by a voice (God or Wisdom) that goes into detail concerning the various types of gruesome punishments that befall the various kinds of sinners. Later it is said that he sees *fidei communibus oculis*, “with the common eyes of faith.”⁷³⁸ At the end of the preceding chapter (I, 9), Suso introduces this vision and the following vision of Heaven as a return to the “prin-

⁷³⁴ See pp. 105-108.

⁷³⁵ Purgatory was not one of the four things, probably as it was doctrinally established as ‘merely’ a preparatory purgation before the soul was admitted into Heaven, and that it, unlike the other ‘places,’ existed only until Final Judgment. See Dinzelsbacher (1999), p. 24.

⁷³⁶ See Künzle’s (1977), p. 229. Interestingly, the reception of separate pieces from the *Horologium* is different from that of the *Bdew*. See Bihlmeyer (1901/61), p. 16*. In the case of the *Horologium*, the chapter on death preparation (II, 2) and the visions of Heaven and Hell (I, 10-11), in addition to the Eucharist chapter (see Chapter Two in this study), circulated most frequently as separate pieces. In the case of the *Bdew*, this picture is a different one, although the death chapter was a popular in its German version (*Bdew* 21). See Haas (1996), pp. 223-5. For an example of a separate reception and modification of this chapter on Hell, see Dinzelsbacher (1999), pp. 148-49.

⁷³⁷ See further comments in Künzle (1977), p. 454.

⁷³⁸ Watch 156; *Hor.* 454.17-18.

ciples of faith.” This suggests that the “eyes of faith” not simply denotes a vision; Eternal punishment for mortal sins was considered to be a truth of divine revelation.⁷³⁹ Since Gregory the Great, theologians had commonly explained the eternity of this punishment by referring to God’s knowledge of sinners that, had they not died, they would continue sinning eternally.⁷⁴⁰ One of the Disciple’s outbursts sums up the understanding of what Hell essentially was: O, end without ending, death heavier than every death, always to be dying and yet not being able to die!”⁷⁴¹

The portrayal of Hell draws on a range of traditional sources, especially biblical ones, but also legends and monastic edifying tales.⁷⁴² We find here many instances of Old Testament Wisdom literature, and, not surprisingly, formulations drawn from the Apocalypse of John.⁷⁴³

Suso’s taxonomy of various punishments corresponding to particular sins also builds on a traditional concept. The Cistercian Caesarius of Heisterbach’s edifying tales in his *Dialogus miraculorum* influenced later medieval Afterlife thought significantly, and Suso relies on Caesarius when he describes the torments that befall bibbers and drunkards.⁷⁴⁴ His account of their punishment builds on that given by Caesarius, but he also adds further details: “...the most frightful demons with burning urns stood at their side and forcibly poured a sulfurous drink like molten lead, glowing with fierce heat, down their throats to burn holes in their bellies.”⁷⁴⁵

⁷³⁹ See Künzle (1977), p. 454.

⁷⁴⁰ See TRE 12, p. 487.

⁷⁴¹ *Watch* 160; *Hor.* 458.10-11 *O finis sine fine, mors gravior omni morte, semper mori et tamen mori non posse.*

⁷⁴² A primary source for this part, as Edmund Colledge discovered, is the popular account assigned to George of Hungary of a pilgrim’s visit to St. Patrick’s Purgatory. See Colledge (1980), esp. p. 114.

⁷⁴³ See, e.g., *Watch* 159; *Hor.* 457.1-3 (draws on Apoc. 16-10).

⁷⁴⁴ *Watch* 157-8; *Hor.* 455.25-456.5; the source is Caesarius’ account of the punishment of the gluttonous Lewis of Thüringen, seen in the *Dialogus miraculorum*, XII, 2, pp. 2178-81. See Colledge (1994), p. 158, n. 12.

⁷⁴⁵ *Watch* 158; *Hor.* 456.2-5 *Sed et daemones deterrimi cum situlis ardentibus iuxta eos stabant, et potum quondam sulfureum plumbo liquefacto simile, nimio calore aestutantem, per os eorum in ventrem pertusum fortiter infundebant.* For a comparison of Caesarius’s accounts of death and Suso’s unprepared death, see below.

Among the various categories of sinners and their punishments in Hell, one is particularly interesting for this study. Together with criminals of various sorts, Suso mentions “those who had despoiled the poor and the friends of God,” a theme we recognize from the *tribulatio* chapters and the ideal of sustaining adversity from impious surroundings. Now we are informed of the punishments of such people, “[these] were violently dragged to some hellish gibbets, excruciating beyond what the human mind can conceive, and hung up and tormented on them; yet they were not dying but being tortured in unspeakable fashion.”⁷⁴⁶ Concerning the false religious, with whom Suso is often concerned, we read “some who had gone around in lamblike clothing that concealed their lion’s dispositions, who like mad dogs had molested the servants of God with curses or insults (...) and had wounded their brethren with wicked persecution, were being gnawed at there by the dogs of hell with cruelest bitings.”⁷⁴⁷ Unprepared death, we shall see, is associated with an impious life of false or lax religiosity;⁷⁴⁸ here we see what kind of hellish punishments were associated with such a life style. This is important to remember when we discuss the parts concerning the fear of the dying man below.

In large parts of this chapter Suso gives voice to those who are suffering in Hell’s torments.⁷⁴⁹ Their lament incorporates words from the Psalms, Job, Wisdom, and also parts of the pseudo-Bernardian work “Most devout meditations.”⁷⁵⁰ This style of lament, we should notice, is very similar to the words uttered by the unprepared dying man in II, 2. The souls who are suffering this unbearable torment are giving lessons to the living and healthy. Some of these passages (“O, how happy is a man not stained with sin, who has not followed the joys of this world”) are nearly parallel to two statements found in the death chapter (“Happy

⁷⁴⁶ Watch 157; Hor. 455.11-15 *hi qui pauperes et amicos Dei, cum adhuc viveret, spoliaverant ... ad patibula quaedam infernalicia, supra humanam aestimationem poenalia, rapti violenter suspendebantur et ibidem torquebantur; nec tamen moriebantur, sed modo indicibili cruciabantur.*

⁷⁴⁷ Watch 157; Hor. 455.15-20 *Nonnulli etiam, qui sub habitu agnino mentem occultaverant leoniam, qui velut canes rabidi servos Dei per maledicta et opprobria aut verba turbativa molestaverant, et confratres suos iniqua persecutione laeserant, ibidem a canibus infernalibus amarissimis morsibus corrodabantur.*

⁷⁴⁸ Cf. also Hor. I, 12, Watch 178-9, for a description of the present state.

⁷⁴⁹ Watch 159-61; Hor. 457-59.

⁷⁵⁰ Künzle (1977), p. 455.

is the man whom this hour finds well prepared, for he will depart in happiness.”).⁷⁵¹ (These lessons from Hell are expressed in antithetic statements, “O how unhappy” - “o how happy.”)

An interesting feature in this part on Hell is the ‘millstone parable,’ found at the end of the chapter. Like the vision of the unprepared dying man, this parable is not seen anywhere before Suso, and may well be an invention of his.⁷⁵² It shows the intense attention given to the idea of the “eternal woe” of Hell, and it deserves to be quoted in full:

So, to suppose the impossible, if there were some millstone so vast that it stretched to the circumference of the heavens, and if some little bird of the smallest size were to come after a hundred thousand years, and to take away from that stone only so much it could peck with its bill, the tenth part of a millet seed in size, and then after another hundred thousand years had gone by were to do as before, to take away a particle of the same size, and go on, particle by particle, so that in ten times a hundred times a thousand years the amount of the stone would not be more reduced than by the size of a millet seed: see, alas, how very thankful we poor wretched would be if after so long as the full consuming of the entire stone would take, there might be an end to the sentence of our eternal damnation. But alas, even this consolation is completely refused to us wretched beings by divine justice.⁷⁵³

The parable reflects a late medieval obsession with the idea of eternal punishment, the ultimate source of religious fear.⁷⁵⁴ Suso demonstrates an intensified idea of Hell in religious thought. This is not new: for a long time in monastic tradition,

⁷⁵¹ Watch 160; Hor. 457.28-29 *O quam felix incoinquinatus, qui post gaudia huius mundi non abiit...* Cf. Watch 235. Hor. 535.31-536.1 *Felix quam bene paratur haec hora invenerit, quia feliciter migrabit.*

⁷⁵² See Künzle (1977), p. 459 n.

⁷⁵³ Watch 162; Hor. 459.12-24 *Unde posito per impossibile, quod esset aliquis lapis molaris adeo magnus, quod ubique circumferentiam caeli contingeret, et quod aliqua avicula minimae quantitatis post centum milia annos veniens, de lapide praedicto solummodo tantum per rostrum suum avelleret, quantum est decima pars milii, et iterum centum milia annorum curricula sicut prius, scilicet unam particulam de decem, et sic per singulas partes, ita quod in decies centenis milibus annis non plus diminueretur quantitas lapidis nisi quantum habet in magnitudine granum unius milii: en proh dolor nos miseri multum grati essemus, quod post talem longam et plenam consumptionem totius lapidis finem haberet sententia nostrae aeternae damnationis. Sed heu haec eadem consolatio miseris a divina iustitia penitus est negata.*

⁷⁵⁴ In a sermon by Berthold von Regensburg (d. 1272) we find a taxonomy of four kinds of death: “*der tot ist vir hande: tot der nature, tot der schult, tot der genade, tot der helle.* The fourth death in hell was “...*ein tot der ewigen vortumenisse, und swelich sele dar in cūmet die enmach nimmer mer ledich werden, quia in inferno nulla es redemptio...*” Cited in Haas (1989b), p. 48-49.

the cultivation of a fear of hell had been an important task, and such a fear was regarded as a key principle of good living.⁷⁵⁵

This fear naturally affected thinking about death. As we have already pointed out, it is the hellish forces and the prospect of being captured by the demons for torment that are driving the dying man's fears and which make his death so difficult. Hell is the place of no hope, and this parable illustrates artistically the doctrine of eternal damnation.⁷⁵⁶

We can also notice the concern with numbers, counting and measuring in relation to the Afterlife.⁷⁵⁷ In the many works that dealt with the Afterlife one way or another, theologians tried to come to grips with how the time of the afterlife corresponded with earthly time, and also how deeds corresponded with particular torments.⁷⁵⁸

Even if it was established doctrinally that guilt remaining after death was to be punished in Purgatory, and that mortal sins led people to Hell, these boundaries are not always that clear in medieval sources. The problem of categorization of sinners, Jacques Le Goff observed, had for a long time been surrounded by some confusion:⁷⁵⁹ it was unclear among scholastics and canonists of the twelfth century whether sinners were to be divided in groups of four or three. Most commonly a middle category of good-but-not-purified sinners, i.e. venial sinners, were understood to be bound for a stay in purgatory. Yet, although theoreticians tried hard to discern and explain the various aspects and states of the Afterlife, the various ideas could mingle, the boundaries between them could become diffuse, and the various ideas could 'infect' each other. For instance, in the work of the famous mystic Hadewijk, we can read about her ability to pray so intensely that a number of souls are delivered from Hell.⁷⁶⁰ From a doctrinal point of view, this makes no

⁷⁵⁵ Cf. McCann, cited in Bernstein (2000), p. 189-90.

⁷⁵⁶ Cf. *Watch* 246. See more on death and hope (*spes*) below.

⁷⁵⁷ Caroline Bynum, (2007) has commented on the enthusiasm for counting and measuring in medieval society, see p 176 with references. See also Angenendt et al. (1995).

⁷⁵⁸ See Le Goff (1984), pp. 73-4.

⁷⁵⁹ See Le Goff (1984), pp. 220-25.

⁷⁶⁰ See Bynum (1995), p. 280.

sense, but pious enthusiasm and personal devotion did not always confirm to doctrine.

Hell and the 'Infernalization' of Purgatory

The ideas of Hell and Purgatory were complex, but also flexible. As an example, we may go back to the first part of this vision of Hell and notice an interesting detail. The Disciple, playing the role of someone who is ignorant of the Last Things, is first struck with great fear at the sight of this dark place; he asks what it might be and Eternal Wisdom explains the sight to him:⁷⁶¹ “This place, as you see, is that set apart for the future punishments, which various souls after they have left the body will receive for the punishment of a variety of their sins; *some of them must purge these sins* [my emphasis], others must indeed suffer eternal damnation.” Hell, where there was no redemption ever,⁷⁶² apparently has a “lighter” aspect, a part that is only temporal. In other words, what can only mean Purgatory, a temporal purgation of sins, seems here to be part of the upper regions of hell.⁷⁶³ Similarly, in I, 14, Suso speaks of the sinner who has not made satisfaction for his deeds and “is condemned to go down into purgatory’s infernal regions until he has repaid the very last farthing.” He continues “O, very long must such a soul wait! O, enduring and very sharp will its torments be ... sorrow endless and measureless.”⁷⁶⁴ The point for Suso in this passage is to contrast this extensive torment with the abilities of passion meditation to relax purgatorial punish-

⁷⁶¹ A vision followed by an explanation is a common structure in visionary literature, and it is often found in Suso’s works. See Dinzelbacher (1981).

⁷⁶² Recall Berthold von Regensburg, *quia in inferno nulla est redemptio*, see above, p. 191, n. 754.

⁷⁶³ Albert the Great and Hugo Ripelin of Strassburg were influential theologians who asserted that Purgatory lies very close to Hell. See Le Goff (1984), p. 257.

⁷⁶⁴ *Watch* 205; *Hor.* 496.15-16. That the sorrows are “endless” is not to be taken literally, but it illustrates the point. The assertion that they are beyond measure can be seen as an adherence to Thomas Aquinas, who insisted that the relationship between sins and future punishment could not be measured which was a tendency in more ‘vulgar’ accounts of Purgatory, cf. Le Goff (1984), p. 274; a general skepticism towards quantification of pious efforts is seen in much moralizing literature from this period, as demonstrated in Angenendt et. al (1995); see also Chapter One in this study.

ments.⁷⁶⁵ Nevertheless, we can observe here, and above, that the idea of purgatory had become one of excessive torment and duration (although limited), and sometimes appears to be quite similar to Hell. Jaques Le Goff, in his classic study of Purgatory, uses a term that was first coined by Arturo Graf, namely the *infernalization* of Purgatory in late medieval theology, preaching and edifying literature.⁷⁶⁶ This term describes aptly the Purgatory that we sometimes see in Suso's writings and especially in his chapter on unprepared death. As we return to the details of the unprepared man's visions below, we will observe how the thought of eternal punishment has 'disseminated' onto the idea of purgatory. The logic of doctrine, of course, demanded that Purgatory was only temporal, but the language of infernalization does not adapt strictly to this logic: On several occasions the dying man suggests a combination of "fire" and "eternal" when he really seems to mean purgatory—which logically was 'merely' temporal.⁷⁶⁷

In Suso, various concepts or 'layers' of purgatory are at play simultaneously, and we shall have an opportunity to comment more on this later on. For now, we can say that the infernalization, the influence of features of Hell upon the idea Purgatory, is something that naturally had consequences for thinking about death.⁷⁶⁸ Even if it was purgatory that was expected for a case of unpreparedness, this Purgatory could be understood as a hellish one.

In short, we have, in Suso's vision of Hell, a piece of the popular eschatology that prevailed in preaching, edifying literature and art of the later Middle Ages. It is easy to recognize Suso's highly moralistic tone, which was also commented on earlier in the chapter on *tribulatio*. There are many correspondences between this portrayal of infernal punishment and the criticism of false, "outer" religiosity, which is often found throughout the *Horologium*. We also find interesting parallels to the death chapter. A wholesome attitude to death and sound knowledge of a

⁷⁶⁵ See Chapter One, pp. 97-105.

⁷⁶⁶ See Le Goff (1984), pp. 273; 310-16, esp. p. 314.

⁷⁶⁷ Not only duration, but also the bitterness and agony (*acerbitas*) of Purgatorial is greatly emphasized in this period, thus making the prospect of Purgatory even more frightening. See Le Goff (1984).

⁷⁶⁸ Le Goff offered that the dramatization of the moment of death in the Later Middle Ages in large was caused by the 'birth of Purgatory'. See Le Goff (1984), p. 292-93. The 'infernalization' of Purgatory, then, makes this all the more acute.

good death is held as the direct opposite to the type of bad religiosity, lavishness, and *querulositas* that Suso felt was corrupting society. Throughout the book, the frightening prospect of Hell and the warnings against sin and corruption are never far away, and in this chapter, it comes to the foreground and is presented in horrible detail.

The Angry Judge II

As was seen in the first chapter in this study, Suso gives much attention to the idea of God as a judge. We recall that in medieval thought there were two conceptions of judgment that ran parallel: individual and general judgment.⁷⁶⁹ We also remember that Suso's idea of judgment is strikingly one-sided: it is almost exclusively that of *individual* judgment (*iudicium particulare*), as opposed to the widespread and biblically founded idea of a collective Final Judgment of Christ.⁷⁷⁰ The common thought was that *iudicium particulare*, individual or particular judgment, would take place immediately after death. Thus it was decided where the soul would go next.

In Suso's visionary universe God appears as an angry, but just, judge (*iudex iratus / districtissimus / iustus*) who gives his strict decision upon every single soul and thoroughly weighs even the smallest and, to the human eye, insignificant of sins.⁷⁷¹ God the judge appears to the Disciple in Book I, chapter seven:

...on another occasion, when the sun, which till then was shining most brightly,
was hidden by clouds, and the chill of the night bade smiling flowers keep silence,

⁷⁶⁹ Thomas Aquinas was the first to formulate a new medieval understanding of a 'double' judgment. See art. "Gericht Gottes" in TRE 12, pp. 483-9.

⁷⁷⁰ See Chapter One, p. 105-110; see also Dinzelbacher (1999), pp. 47-49.

⁷⁷¹ *Watch* 254 "O strictest of judges, how dire are your judgments, how heavily, as you judge my wretched soul, do you weigh those sins which most men do not even care about because they seem so petty." *Hor.* 536.30-32 *O districtissime iudex, quam severissima sunt iudicia tua, quam multum ponderas in iudicando me miserum ea, quae pro sui modicitate pauci etiam curare praesumunt.*

and as storms thundered out (...) the Disciple said: 'Fear and trembling have come upon me and darkness has covered me' [Ps. 54.6].⁷⁷²

With this change of weather, the passage demonstrates one of the many dramatic mood shifts characteristic of this work's oscillation between the emotional extremes of spiritual life: the preceding chapter about spiritual joys, sweetness, where eternal Wisdom introduces herself and her loving presence to the Disciple, is here followed by an intense horror vision of the *iudex iratus*.⁷⁷³ At this sight, the Disciple is struck with immense fear and his sense of sinfulness becomes overwhelming. The vision that follows is almost entirely a literary vision, a composite of biblical material from the Old and the New Testament that together make out the imagery of God as an angry judge, seated on a throne of fire.⁷⁷⁴

Woe to wretched and hardened sinners! Woe to the hellish and damned souls and to the perverse spirits who will see that furious face and its terrible expression without any hope of grace, and will hear that terrifying voice as it thunders: "Go, 'you cursed, into everlasting fire.'" [Mt 25.41] (...) your fatherly face is not to be borne, its severity is so amazing when you turn it to your sons to emend them, not to destroy them, that it may seem to be like hell (...) How, I ask, O most loving goodness, can it be true that you are lovable, when you can be so terrible?⁷⁷⁵

This question, which is also the title of the chapter, formulates the extremes of medieval religiosity and expresses wonder at the range of God's possible appearances : immense wrath and threat of damnation on the one hand, and a mild and loving God of protection and reconciliation on the other. The short and precise answer to the Disciple's question is as follows: "I am indeed terrible to sinners, yet lovable to the just and to those who love me."⁷⁷⁶

Berndt Hamm has written extensively on the new forms of *presence of grace* or "near grace" and innovations in terms of new forms of mediation of

⁷⁷² Watch 133; Hor. 434.3-7 *Alio quodam tempore, cum sol esset sub nubilo, qui prius admodum clare refulsat, et gelu noctis ridentibus flosculis silentium improvisisset, (...) inquit discipulus, 'venerunt super me, et contexerunt me tenebrae.'*

⁷⁷³ A fundamental tenet in mysticism is both the experience of presence and absence of God, as seen poignantly in this part of the *Horologium*. See Hamm (2007b), pp. 136-7.

⁷⁷⁴ Watch 133; Hor. 434.

⁷⁷⁵ Watch 134-35; Hor. 435.17-24.

⁷⁷⁶ Watch 135; Hor. 436.4-5 *Terribilis quidem sum peccatoribus, amabilis autem iustis ac me diligentibus.*

grace in this period.⁷⁷⁷ Hamm identifies new ways of thinking and writing about God's proximity, and he also calls attention to what we may call the flipside of the coin: the *absence* of grace, *Ungnade*.⁷⁷⁸ By this is meant experience of demonic powers, of Satan, and the intense awareness of own sinfulness and absence of God. By *Ungnade* is also meant strong notions of the wrathful and punishing God that tended to dominate the pious minds of the later Middle Ages.⁷⁷⁹ It is safe to say that the mental presence of such forces is a strong current and a dominating element of piety in the *Horologium sapientiae*; in the passage just quoted, the severity of the face of God is so extremely frightening that it "may seem to be like hell" (*ut inferno similis esse videatur*).⁷⁸⁰ The idea of the angry judge as a source of religious fear is something that we should have in mind when we consider the death chapter and the dying man's death-bed qualms. Among this man's last words are: "O, terrible sight of the just judge, already present in my fears, soon himself to appear to me!"⁷⁸¹ The afterlife elements, and the judge in particular, come *near* and 'intervene' in his spiritual life.

It is commonly asserted that the moment of death in this period became decisive in an entirely new way, and that this is related to intensified eschatological expectations.⁷⁸² The appearance of the judge is a 'device' used by Suso to encourage inner confession and mental submission as a sinner before God's court. Such a gesture is part of the pious pattern that Suso saw as effective in terms of death preparation. Hamm has spoken of a *finalization* of life as a primary tendency in religious literature in this period, which means a concentration toward the death-bed situation, the final moment of life, in a new way. Suso's vision of death, his intense *imago mortis*, and his insistence on keeping the thought of death present in life, is a major contribution to this trend.⁷⁸³ With the finalization of life as such a

⁷⁷⁷ See Hamm (2009); (2010b)

⁷⁷⁸ Hamm (2007a), p. 305.

⁷⁷⁹ For interesting variations on the theme of God's wrath in later medieval iconography, see Dinzelsbacher (1996), pp. 135-88.

⁷⁸⁰ *Watch* 135; *Hor* 435.24.

⁷⁸¹ *Watch* 254; *Hor.* 537.1-3 *O terribilis aspectus iusti iudicis mihi iam praesentis per timorem, subito venturus per exhibitionem.*

⁷⁸² See Le Goff (1984), pp. 292-93; see also Grosse (1994), 215-16.

⁷⁸³ Hamm (2007a), p. 307.

strong tendency, the art of dying becomes a formulation of religious life itself, a life of eschatological awareness: a ‘death mentality.’ We will see that Suso’s text on death encourages not only meditation on the deathbed situation, but also the anticipation of this ‘drama of decision,’ the drama of death as confrontation of humans and their guilt with the judgment of God.

What is Unprepared Death?

We turn now to Suso’s visionary dialogue on death and death preparation. This teaching, as said, is presented through an intense portrayal of a case of *unprepared death*.

The vision, or similitude (*similitudo*), is shown to the Disciple by Eternal Wisdom in order to educate him, and the reader, about death.⁷⁸⁴ Like most of the *Horologium*, this teaching on unprepared death is conveyed through dialogue. As Eternal Wisdom withdraws, the unprepared man on his deathbed becomes the Disciple’s new dialogue partner. The two engage in a conversation about unprepared death and what death preparation is, before the Disciple becomes witness to this man’s final deathbed struggles.⁷⁸⁵ At the end of the chapter the “signs of death” (shortness of breath, loss of power, paleness, and so on) indicate that this man’s departure is very near.⁷⁸⁶ At this last stage, we are introduced to yet another layer of vision, as the dying man’s own mental images of the threatening forces of the afterlife, of demons, judgment, and purgatorial punishment, begin to dominate the text. As the man departs—the text suggests that he will be led to purgatory—

⁷⁸⁴ *Watch* 243-44 “‘I shall expound the mystery of this teaching to you in an illustration that you can understand’ (...) When the disciple heard these words, he began to withdraw his thoughts from external matters and to give great inward attention to the similitude suggested to him. There appeared before his eyes the likeness of a most handsome young man, who had been warned by death that he was soon to depart for the next world, and who had made no preparations for his soul’s salvation”; *Hor.* 528.1-2 ‘... *ideo sub exemplo sensibili doctrinae huius mysterium tibi tradam* (...) 3-4 *Vide ergo nunc similitudinem hominis morientis, et tecum pariter loquentis.*’ *Discipulus haec audiens coepit se ab exterioribus colligere et in seipso similitudinem propositam diligentissime considerare. Erat autem ante eum similitudo iuvenis pulcherrimi qui morte praeventus, in proximo migraturus erat et de salute animae suae nihil disposuerat.*

⁷⁸⁵ *Watch* 244; *Hor.* 528.3-4.

⁷⁸⁶ *Watch* 253; *Hor.* 536.16-25; See Haas (1989b), p. 172.

Eternal Wisdom reappears and the main level of dialogue about spiritual life with the Disciple continues. In the meantime, the Disciple has been deeply affected by this vision, and he now wants to change his way of life and prepare for death.⁷⁸⁷

This summarizes the main course of Suso's dialogue about unprepared death in the second chapter of Book II of *Horologium sapientiae*. The chapter is entitled *De scientia utilissima homini mortali, quae est scire mori*, "Of the Knowledge Most Profitable to a Mortal Man, Which is to Know How to Die."⁷⁸⁸ This text has a prominent place in the work: after the Suso's caricature of the unfruitful and irrelevant quarrels of the philosophers in chapter one of the second book, this chapter about death preparation is the first of four 'practical' chapters (Book II, 2-5) that are said to make out a "salutary discipline" (*disciplina salutaris*), a compendium of essential elements of spiritual life. These four parts, the elements that are crucial to learn for a truly devout on the way to salvation, are as follows: first, to learn how to die; then to learn how to live a spiritual life of asceticism; to learn how to receive the Holy Sacrament devoutly, and, last, to learn how to praise God "with a pure heart." Unlike the empty pursuits of scientists, these parts are emphatically held as fruitful for salvation—much in the same was as *tribulatio* is held to be profitable in the key parts of Book I, as we have seen. With reference to this spiritual compendium, and drawing on an ancient ideal of life and learning in unity, Eternal Wisdom tells the Disciple that "My teaching will itself be your life" (*doctrina mea, ipsa erit vita tua*).⁷⁸⁹ In the first of these four 'practical' chapters, then, we find Suso's intense vision of a man who faces *an unprepared death* (*mors indisposita*) and who admonishes people in the midst of their life to take measures and to prepare for death.

⁷⁸⁷ Watch 255 "I intend to learn how to die, I do not want to put off my penitence, in no way do I wish to delay my conversion." *Hor.* 538.11-12 *Discere mori propono, differe paenitentiam nolo, prolongare conversionem nullatenus volo.*

⁷⁸⁸ Watch 242; *Hor.* 526.12-13.

⁷⁸⁹ Watch 242; *Hor.* 526.24-5 *Doctrina mea, ipsa erit vita tua.*

Scientia utilissima

Spiritual deterioration is a main concern in the *Horologium*. The world is “growing old,” and in various ways people are giving in to its wickedness and spiritual life is thought to be in a crisis.⁷⁹⁰ Suso points to the *defectum fervoris spiritualis* and the “evils of a world growing old.”⁷⁹¹ “(...) the times are truly so ill” (*malitiam temporis*),” he complains, and this manifests itself in that people do not “feel compunction” from such words as those of the dying man. Indeed, the death of this man in itself, is a consequence of a contemporary life-style. We said that the two thematic complexes are related: eschatology and criticism of contemporary mentalities. This relationship is made explicit in the beginning of the death chapter: Speaking of all the “empty men” caught up in their fruitless pursuits, Suso mentions here that “they spend much of their time talking nonsense and jesting (...) and in other such utterly empty matters, and then when death suddenly comes upon them, because it finds them ill-prepared, it wrests the wretched soul from the body and leads it off to hell.”⁷⁹²

Very often, the “empty matters” that people are entangled in are presented as *vana curiositas* or the other pitfalls that were seen in connection with the new opportunities academic life in this period. Let us observe the title of this chapter in the *Horologium*: *De scientia utilissima homini mortali, quae est scire mori*, “Of the Knowledge Most Profitable to a Mortal Man, Which Is to Know How to Die.”⁷⁹³ Suso formulates his teaching on death preparation as a “science” (*scientia*), and he does this in relation to a school-and-church criticism that is characteristic of the profile of the *Horologium*.⁷⁹⁴ The situation in the schools, as presented

⁷⁹⁰ Lamentations over the lacking spiritual fervor and exhortations to spiritual reform is a primary topic also in chapter twelve in Book I, which is another ‘new’ part in the *Horologium*. See *Watch* 176-83; *Hor* 468-77. For more on this theme, see Chapter One in this study. See also Haas (1989b), pp. 50-55.

⁷⁹¹ *Watch* 251-52; *Hor.* 535.2-6; *mundi senescentis malignitatem*.

⁷⁹² *Watch* 243; *Hor.* 527. 22-23 *In vaniloquiis et iocis et scurrilitatibus ac ceteris similibus supervacuis rebus multum de tempore suo expedunt (...) et ideo cum extemplo mors supervenit, quia male paratos invenit, miseram animam de corpore rapit et ad gehennam deducit.*

⁷⁹³ *Hor* 499.1-2; *Watch* 242.

⁷⁹⁴ Alois Haas has observed that this is the first known instance where *scire mori* is presented as *scientia utilissima*. Haas (1996), p. 226.

in Suso's caricature in the first chapter of Book II, is symptomatic of the present state of affairs, where people neglect to provide for their own salvation and for the edification of their neighbor.⁷⁹⁵ With this portrayal as a background, Suso can effectively pronounce his teaching on death preparation as a *scientia utilissima*, in contrast to the useless endeavors of academic life. To learn to die is a "knowledge most useful and is to be preferred to all the arts."⁷⁹⁶ This teaching reformulates an ancient ideal of a total integration of life and learning: *Doctrina mea, ipsa erit vita tua*, "My teaching will itself be your life."⁷⁹⁷ Eternal Wisdom intervenes with a teaching on death, which, if appropriated, is a saving doctrine that helps to avoid the dangers of an unprepared death that are said to befall so many in the 'present' time.⁷⁹⁸

As the following four parts of the spiritual compendium, beginning with the chapter on death, are presented, Eternal Wisdom constantly refers to *utilitas*, usefulness and "profit" of this doctrine or edification (*aedificatio*). In various ways, it is expressed that this teaching centers around that which is "necessary for salvation" (*Scientia utilissima; Audi me et docebo te utilia; disciplinae salutaris*).⁷⁹⁹ Oppositely, what goes on in the schools is directly unfruitful and even an *impediment* for reaching this goal safely.⁸⁰⁰ This salvation orientation was seen

⁷⁹⁵ See *Watch* 240-41; *Hor.* 525.31-32 *qui non Dei laudem, vel suam et aliorum aedificationem, sed suam promotionem quaerunt.*

⁷⁹⁶ *Watch* 243, *Hor.* 527.10-11 *Scientia utilissima, et cunctis artibus praeferenda est haec scientia, scire videlicet mori*

⁷⁹⁷ *Hor.* 526.24-5; *Watch* 242.

⁷⁹⁸ *Watch* 243; *Hor.* 527.

⁷⁹⁹ As we have seen, the *tribulatio* is outlined very similarly, with numerous references to the "profit" or "usefulness" of sustaining hardships. See *Watch* 197 "What can be of greater use than this most precious treasure?" *Hor.* 490.2-3 *Quid hoc thesauro pretiosissimo utilius?* In that same chapter (I, 13), we have seen how also the endurance of adversities is contrasted to unfruitful scientific pursuits: *Watch* 194-95 "... you may have outstripped every rhetorician and dialectician in eloquence and subtlety, but this will not bring you a good life as will that one thing which is necessary for salvation, that is to abandon yourself out of 'love from a pure heart and a good conscience and an unfeigned faith' (1. Tim 1.5.) and to commit yourself wholly to God in every tribulation, and patiently to conform yourself to his will"; *Hor.* 487.13-18 *si cunctos rhetores ac dialecticos facundia et argutiis praeires: haec omnia non tantum ad bonam tibi vitam conferrent, quantum hoc unum ad salutem necessarium, scilicet ex 'caritate de corde puro et conscientia bona et fide non ficta' te ipsum deserere, et totum te Deo in omni tribulatione committere, eiusque voluntati parere patienter.*

⁸⁰⁰ See *Watch* 250: "shun all the poisons and hindrances to your eternal salvation"; *Hor.* 533.34.-534.1 *cuncta quoque noxia a salute aeterna te retrahentia ac impediencia proicias.*

also in our study of Suso's *tribulatio* teaching earlier, and it is a distinct feature of the *Horologium* as a whole. We can say, in line with Berndt Hamm and his theory on "Frömmigkeitstheologie," that Suso in the *Horologium* is concerned with salvation and nothing else.⁸⁰¹

Mors indisposita

The unprepared man is a figure that appears to the Disciple's imagination and engages in conversation with him.⁸⁰² This *imago mortis*, "image of death," is presented as one out of many cases of unprepared death. It is a symptom of the poor state of religiosity that Suso often returns to in his book and that we commented on in the first chapter of this study. The dying man—the text suggests that he is about 30 years old—is described as "the likeness of a most handsome young man, who had been warned by death that he was very soon to depart."⁸⁰³ That is, he is mortally ill and approaches his last moment. We are told that he "had made no preparations for his soul's salvation."⁸⁰⁴

Large parts of the chapter consist of the unprepared man's words of lament. His speech is dense with quotations from the Old Testament, and particularly wisdom literature such as the Proverbs, the Psalms, Wisdom, Ecclesiastes, and so

⁸⁰¹ See Hamm (1999), in response to the objections made by Ulrich Köpf. Along with this concentration toward what is fruitful for salvation, Suso often emphasizes pious works that are 'auxiliary' for reaching this overall goal. See, e.g., chapter seven in Book II, as commented on in the introduction to this study, or chapter twelve of Book I: Concerned with the lack of religious discipline in his present time, the narrator looks back on a golden age of devotion, a time when "...men were not only exhorted about the things necessary for salvation, but the works of super-ogation were praised as much as possible; and pious exercises were commended to the faithful as those by which what was necessary to salvation might be better obtained, and, once obtained, preserved. But nowadays such matters are too often passed over in silence..." *Hor.* 474.14-18 *Antiquitus non solum fiebant exhortations de decessariis salute, sed toto posse opera supererogationis extollebatur; et haec pietatis exercitia fidelibus suadebatur, tamquam ea, per quae saluti necessaria commodius acquirebantur et acquisita conservabantur, Nunc vero plerique talia silentio transeunt...*

⁸⁰² This is a common strategy in Suso's works. See, for instance, the protagonist's discussion with the "nameless wild one" in this *Buchlein der warheit*, Bdw 352.11; *Exemplar* 326.

⁸⁰³ Louise Gnädinger, (1998), p. 125, has interpreted this man as the Disciple's *Dönpeltgänger*, which is reasonable as the primary message of the text is: 'it could be you.'

⁸⁰⁴ *Watch* 244; *Hor.* 528.5-8 *Erat autem ante eum similitudo iuvenis pulcherrimi qui morte praeventus, in proximo migratus erat et de salute animae suae nihil disposuerat.*

on.⁸⁰⁵ The words of Job are evoked particularly often. In-between these traditional sources, however, we can see a distinctly late medieval phenomenon, namely the figure of *personified death*.⁸⁰⁶ We see that the dying man addresses death as a person:

...now, o wretched death, you have rushed upon me as though from an ambush ...
You have seized upon me and bound me with a thousand cords, and you are dragging me along with you in iron fetters, as they are accustomed to drag a condemned man to the torments of death.⁸⁰⁷

Like in the popular genres that dealt with death, we see here the figure of death confronting the living. To a late medieval audience, this personification of death would call to mind a skeleton or a corpse that comes to capture the soul.⁸⁰⁸ This figure of death is often combined with the motive of a *hunt*, where death is a hunter, and the soul of the dying is his prey,⁸⁰⁹ and we can see also in Suso's text that death's "ambush" is associated with trap, snare, ditch, and so on, and the dying person is portrayed as a small animal unable to flee.⁸¹⁰ Death has *bound* him and drags him along. The unprepared departure of this man is described as a battle between this figure of death, which has "ambushed" the man, and the body, unwilling to give up the soul. The Disciple's first reaction to the dying man's lament also echoes the message seen in the *Totentanz* or other popular genres on death from the same period: "You do not know that the judgment if death is impartial (...) It has no pity on youth or age. It does not know who are noble, and it is not in awe of the mighty. It destroys the rich man as it does the poor. (...) Do you suppose that death ought to spare you alone, and that it would not dare to set foot inside your abode of clay?"

⁸⁰⁵ See esp. *Watch* 246-47; *Hor.* 529-31.

⁸⁰⁶ See Dinzelbacher (1996), pp. 188-239. This figure of death is best known from the somewhat later *Totentanz* genre. See also Romano and Tenenti (1967), p. 121.

⁸⁰⁷ *Watch* 244; *Hor.* 538.17-20 *Sed nunc mors, o misera, repente quasi ex insidiis erumpens irruisti super me. Comprehendisti atque mille funibus ligasti, et in vinculis ferries tecum trahis, sicut trahi solet damnatus ad supplicium mortis.*

⁸⁰⁸ Hamm (2007a), p. 307; Romano and Tenenti (1967), pp. 116-24, here p. 118-19; death appears often a rotting corpse or a skeleton, a counter-image to the living body.

⁸⁰⁹ See Dinzelbacher (1996), p. 194.

⁸¹⁰ See *Watch* 244; 247; *Hor.* 528, 531.

A problem, it is said, is that people do not want to consider death at all.⁸¹¹ Thus to be given the opportunity to know about “how treacherous death is” is held as immensely valuable.⁸¹² However, with this commonsensical assertion made by the Disciple, that death comes to all, and in the dying man’s response to these words, an interesting tension in the text is seen. The Disciple has not yet fully understood the problem of unprepared death. To an unprepared man, dying an unprepared death, the insight of the *memento mori* is of little help. Evoking the words of Job, he says to the Disciple: “Truly ‘you are a troublesome comforter’.”⁸¹³ It is namely not the fact that death comes to all that bothers him, but the way he is dying.⁸¹⁴ He is not lamenting that death comes, but that it finds him unprepared, and that he now will be led off to torment. It is repeatedly suggested that unprepared death is *dangerous*, that it brings great harm and perils, and so on. Suso wants to go beyond this commonsense level of death awareness and say something more; the dying man is lamenting his lack of deeds that would have prepared him for death. Now he faces the consequences.

This points us to an important feature of *Ars moriendi* literature more generally. Sven Grosse, in his study of Jean Gerson and the theme *scrupulositas* in the later medieval period, states that Gerson’s *Ars moriendi* is not primarily concerned with the confrontation of the living with death, which is the main motive in much medieval literature on death. The real confrontation, Grosse asserts, is that between *sin and forgiveness* in the moment of death.⁸¹⁵ Although Jean Gerson wrote almost a century later than Heinrich Suso, this observation is relevant also for the text we are considering. We see that the image of personified death capturing the soul like a small animal, lends strength to the concept of unpreparedness. However, as seen in the discussion of the Disciple and the dying man, and even

⁸¹¹ See *Watch* 243 “But, alas, among some religious, just as with foolish men of the world, you will find very many who have such horror of their death that they scarcely wish to be reminded of it” *Hor.* 527.18-21 *Sed proh dolor in nonnullis religiosis, sicut et in saeculi hominibus vanis, valde multos invenies, qui mortem hanc tantum abhorrent, ut vix eius memoriam admittere velint*

⁸¹² *Watch* 257; *Hor.* 539.19-22.

⁸¹³ *Watch* 245; *Hor.* 529.10-11; cf. *Jb* 16.2.

⁸¹⁴ *Watch* 245 “I am not weeping for death’s judgment but for the harms that come from an unprepared death.” *Hor.* 529.15-16 *Non defleo iudicium mortis, sed fleo damna indispositae mortis.*

⁸¹⁵ Grosse (1994), pp. 216-17.

more as the dialogue moves on, the motive of personified death is really secondary to the real drama of unpreparedness: this is the drama of sin and neglect confronted by the threat of retribution. The problem of this man in the vision is not only that he neglected to think about death, but also that he was not aware of the *dangers* of unprepared death. That is to say, he had not truly considered the anger of the Judge, the torments of Purgatory and the endlessness of Hell.⁸¹⁶

At first sight, Suso's text does not seem to put emphasis on the element of forgiveness at all. The message is harsh: for the dying man, it is too late, and he is eventually to be led off to torment. This is, of course, because the text portrays a bad death and Suso wants to frighten the reader into a change of life-style. Rather than sin and forgiveness, asserted by Sven Grosse as the primary confrontation in the *Ars moriendi* literature, Suso's negative, strict version of *Ars moriendi* focuses attention on the confrontation of *sin* and *judgment*, or alternatively, sin and *punishment*.⁸¹⁷ On occasion, however, Suso also suggests what a good death is, and this corresponds to what Sven Grosse has asserted, as will be seen below when we comment on Suso's outline of good deathbed behavior at the end of this dialogue. The main point is that in the *Ars moriendi* literature a new drama comes to the fore compared to the genres that deal with life-death confrontation—a drama about individual sin and the afterlife.⁸¹⁸ These two ways of speaking about death are at play in the dialogue, and the Disciple gradually takes in the new understanding, the insight of the *Ars moriendi*, as seen in the following pages.⁸¹⁹ This in line with a general tendency that has been observed by many, namely the strongly

⁸¹⁶ or Heaven, for that matter. However, in Suso, as in literature on the *novissima* generally, heaven tends to receive less emphasis than the other parts of the afterlife. See Hjelde (2010). *Watch* 257 "O, how happy is the man who makes provision for these last things, who will beware of sin, who does not neglect your advice, who at all times prepares himself for this hour." *Hor* 540.2-4 *O quam felix, qui haec novissima providet, qui sibi a peccatis cavet, qui consilium tuum non neglegit, qui se in omni tempore ad hanc horam disponit.*

⁸¹⁷ See Hamm (2007a), p. 306.

⁸¹⁸ See Grosse, finds this in a later *Ars moriendi* text, namely that of Jean Gerson. (1994), pp. 215-37. As far as I can see, this *proprium* of the *Artes moriendi* compared with other "death genres" that portray confrontation of the living with the dead, also characterizes Suso's text. After all, the dying man is not yet dead; Death as a personification which confronts humans plays a secondary role. See also Romano and Tenenti (1967), pp. 118-19.

⁸¹⁹ *Watch* 247; 250; *Hor.* 531; 533.26-19.

ethicized teaching found religious literature of the late medieval period.⁸²⁰ With the threats of damnation and vast torments at hand, it is not enough to speak about death in terms of *memento mori*. The teaching on death is a teaching about sin and morality that calls for a sincere motivation for improvement.

An unprepared death is a *desperate* death. As the afterlife forces appear to be coming closer, the dying man becomes overwhelmed with fear. His fear goes far beyond that which is the ideal, a healthy, balanced fear of God, which, together with love of God, makes up necessary parts of spiritual life.⁸²¹ As Suso expresses several times, *inordinate emotions* in life lead to an excessive fear in the last moment, and so the final situation becomes a violent struggle in which death “wrests the wretched soul from the body.” The unprepared do not simply leave this world, but are “violently carried off.”⁸²² An unprepared death is an *uneasy* death, and this mirrors a life of inordinate affections. This is expressed also by the crying souls in purgatory, which appear toward the end of the text and lament their own previous *inordinate* love.⁸²³ The dying man says that death now finds him ill-prepared because he neglected the quest for a “pure heart” (*puritas cordis*) and the things that bring eternal salvation, let himself be “corrupted by (...) inordinate affections these last thirty years.”⁸²⁴ In a more general statement, it is said that this dangerous situation is caused by the “inordinate desire for honors, the excessive concern for the body, the love of the world and the overanxious searching for private possessions; these things blind the hearts of many in the crowds,

⁸²⁰ See Hamm, cited in Angenendt et al, (1995), p. 61 n. 361.

⁸²¹ See *Watch* 256, quoting Psalm 110.10: “fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” *Hor.* 539.10-12. See also *Watch* 242, cf. Rom 11.20 “do not wish to know exalted things but fear”; *Hor.* 526.10; and more generally stated, *Watch* 135: “It is profitable for my elect in this world always ‘to have both fear and love’ so that fear, always urging the soul, ‘may draw it from poisonous excesses,’ and love, gladdening it, may lift up to the things of heaven.” *Hor.* 436.6-9 *Electos meos in hoc mundo timorem pariter et amorem iugiter habere expedit, ut et timor semper animam sollicitans a noxiis retrahat excessibus, et amor laetificans erigat ad superna.*

⁸²² *Watch* 252; *Hor.* 535.10-11.

⁸²³ *Watch* 254; *Hor.* 537.15-17.

⁸²⁴ *Watch* 249; *Hor.* 533.6-7.

and lead to such perils.”⁸²⁵ Throughout the *Horologium* a variety of such inordinate emotions are mentioned: Inordinate sadness, inordinate fear, inordinate love, or, more generally, “inordinate affections.”⁸²⁶

The problem of unpreparedness is complex: somewhat simplistic we can say that an unordered life—a life of excess and in disagreement with the good ways, as prescribed by Suso—leads to an uneasy death. Fear is ambiguous in this text, and we need to discern between different degrees of fear: On the one hand, too much fear of death causes procrastination, and in the end this leads them to a death in despair and a fear which is even worse. This is the fear of the dying man, and desperate fear is associated with danger.⁸²⁷ On the other hand, fear is held as not only useful but also necessary, in line with the words from the Psalms, which resounded throughout medieval religious culture: “fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” The very point of this vision is, after all, to incite a wholesome fear of God and the Afterlife that gives new direction to life.

There is the problem of neglect, simply, and of giving in to inordinate desires for luxury, good food, fame and so on. However, this neglect of death preparations or consideration of death in life can also be caused by fear. Thus it presents a hindrance to a proper preparation;⁸²⁸ Excessive fear makes people put off their preparations to tomorrow (Suso recalls Augustine’s “*cras cras*”). A difficult balance for the consolers of inner life: Frighten towards improvement without causing fear to become “inordinate,” which could paralyze and lead to neglect.

The dying man’s lament often mentions “the days gone by,” fruitlessly spent. In these passages of lament words like *inutile* or *sine fructu* can often be seen. The dying man regrets his past life spent in neglect. He “paid no heed,” he says, “to how immensely precious time was (...) loosing the bridle upon my

⁸²⁵ Watch 252; *Hor.* 535.13-16 *Et si vis scire causam tanti et tam communis periculi: ecce honoris appetitus inordinatus, corporis cura superflua, amor terennus et sollicitudo nimia quaestus rei familiaris excaecant multitudinis corda diversa, et ad haec perducunt discrimina.*

⁸²⁶ See, e.g., Watch 169; 204; *Hor.* 466.22; 495.25-26.

⁸²⁷ See Watch 94: “Wisdom: But do you not know that despair is a dangerous matter? Upon no account must you despair of your salvation...” *Hor* 400.1-2; Künzle observes that this draws on Aquinas, *STh* II-II, q 20, a 3.c ... *desperatio est periculosior.*

⁸²⁸ Watch 243 “you will find very many who have such a horror of death that they scarcely wish to be reminded of it.” *Hor.* 527.19-21.

concupiscence.”⁸²⁹ Not only that: the dying man also says that he had *relied on others to help him*. This is clearly a mistake, one that has contributed to his present state of unpreparedness. “I put myself into their hands;” he mentions that now he is in a poor state, and that “no one else with penitential” acts can help him. An important message in this text is: Do not rely on others, but help your-self! This striking feature points once again to the serious problems of contemporary piety that Suso so often addresses. For centuries, medieval religiosity and practices surrounding death had been based on the prayers of others, suffrages, as a way of securing one’s afterlife.⁸³⁰ Apparently, this ‘system’ is not any longer reliable because of the poor state of piety. This same idea is expressed in the passages that invoke the voices of suffering souls in purgatory toward the end of the dialogue. When these poor souls specify how they got in that situation, their message is very similar to that of the dying man throughout the dialogue. Like him, the souls lament their previous neglect: “why did we not provide for our own salvation!”⁸³¹ Like the dying man said about himself, these souls have *relied on others* to help them and they had been too attached to other people in their “inordinate love.” Now they receive no help from their friends.⁸³² In other words, the living neglect to pray for the dead, again a signal of the poor state of piety. The solidarity between the living and the dead is not to be relied on. What Suso does, through the voice of the poor souls, and in previously in the chapter, is to criticize the reliance on practices related to the dead and to the Afterlife such as suffrages and perhaps also indulgences. He does this not in the sense of questioning the legitimacy or doctrinal foundation of such practices—prayers for souls “in places of cleansing” are granted efficiency on other occasions⁸³³—but from a point of view of piety and with pious deterioration in mind. Suso deprecates reliance on the works of others because it is not *secure*. Death is not prepared for through other people’s efforts. It

⁸²⁹ *Watch* 246; *Hor.* 530.14-16 *Non curabam temporis pretiositatem immensam, sed ‘datis flatibus navi,’ [Acts 27.15] et freno concupiscentiae laxato.*

⁸³⁰ See Grosse (1994), p. 216.

⁸³¹ *Watch* 255; *Hor.* 537.

⁸³² *Watch* 254; *Hor.* 537.14-15.

⁸³³ *Watch* 328-29; *Hor.* 603.29-30 *sed et animabus in locis purgabilibus degentibus pium inde adiutorium confertur.*

is a personal matter and it is up to each individual to take action and prepare for his or her own death.

The Problem of Deathbed Penitence

The dialogue is in part series of lamentations in the voice of the dying man. He did not take the opportunity to change while he was healthy, and now it is too late for him. Why? Can't he show repentance for his past sins and be reconciled with God before he dies? The deathbed situation portrayed by Suso outlines a specific problem, a 'penitential disability.'

Through the dialogue with this poor man, the Disciple learns more about unprepared death. He understands that it does not simply mean the death that comes to all, but that it is related to sin and penitence and missed opportunities for improvement. Now he tries to act as a confessor and exhorts the unprepared man to turn around and to do penitence: "God does [not] want a soul to perish, but he calls it back," he declares,⁸³⁴ and continues: "Therefore hear my voice, and do penance for your past deeds, and 'return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful,' and if your end is good, that will be enough for salvation."⁸³⁵

This reflects a merciful attitude and an attempt by Disciple of applying a strategy of 'minimal requirement' in a delicate situation, a tendency that can be seen in later *Ars moriendi* texts.⁸³⁶ Suso, on occasions, employs a theology of minimum requirement, as we have seen in his approach to Eucharist devotion and the problems of spiritual insufficiency in chapter two of this study. A similar tendency can indeed be seen in Suso's 'rudimentary' *Ars moriendi*, as we will discuss below. However, in the case of unprepared death, which is a very serious matter, the point is to warn the reader who still has the opportunity to improve. In-

⁸³⁴ 2 Kings 14.14.

⁸³⁵ *Watch* 247; *Hor.* 531.14 *nec vult Deus perire animam, sed retratat cogitans*, [2. Kgs 14.14]. *Hor.* 531.16-18 *Audi ergo vocem meam, et age paenitentiam de transactis, et 'convertere ad dominum Deum tuum, quia benignus et misericors est;'* [Os 14.2; Jl 2.13] *et si finis erit bonus, sufficit ad salutem*. See also Grosse (1994), p. 39.

⁸³⁶ *Watch* 247; *Hor.* 531.18 *sufficit ad salutem*. See Hamm (2004), pp. 88-127, esp. p. 101. The expression 'strategy of minimal requirement,' used also by Hamm, derives from Grosse (1994), pp. 93-96. This is precisely the expression used later in Gerson's *Ars* in relation to deathbed penitence. See Rädle (2003) p. 726.

stead of inserting a merciful approach, Suso goes to lengths to portray the severity of an unprepared death, which is to him a very serious matter. The Disciple, as we can see in the dying man's response to his suggestion, has not grasped the severity of the situation:

What are these words which you are saying? Must I do penance? Must I turn from my sins? Do you not see how closely death is pressing on me? See how utterly terrified I am by the fear and horror of death—I am bound in its chains, and such cares oppress my mind that I can hardly see what I should do. ...all my sense have left me, and I can think of nothing but how I may evade the moment of death, which yet I am unable to evade.⁸³⁷

This passage illustrates the heart of the problem: because of excessive fear, this man cannot turn to God and repent, because his repentance would be uncertain. The reason for this is that his repentance would be motivated by fear of punishment. Hence, he could be “feigning,” that is to say, not really repenting but simply trying to escape the perils of judgment. In the dying man, we see a fear that is *paralyzing* and totally disables him from penitence.

In this part of the dialogue, the two characters recall a set of conflicting views that went many centuries back.⁸³⁸ Augustine and Pope Leo, in the fifth century, had held differing opinions as to whether a priest could safely state the words of reconciliation to a repenting sinner on the deathbed even if he, because of the nature of this situation, was not able to fulfill the sacrament with works of satisfaction. Leo's position was a merciful one, which said that the priest could do this; God was merciful and would reconcile with the Christian that had done his or her utmost. Augustine, however, could not accept such a claim: for him, deathbed penitence was fundamentally *uncertain*.⁸³⁹ The reason for this was that the works

⁸³⁷ Watch 247-48; Hor. 531.19-27 *Quis est hic sermo, quem loqueris? Debeo paenitere? Debeo me convertere? Nonne vides angustias mortis me prementis? Ecce timore et horrore mortis tam vehementer perterritus sum, vinculis mortis alligatus sum, et anxietatibus nimis mens mea premitur, ut quid agendum sit penitus non videam. ... sic omnis sensus a me recessit, nil cogitans nisi hoc, si quo modo evadere possem mortis discrimen, quod tamen evadere nequeo.*

⁸³⁸ The positions of Augustine and Leo were available to later medieval theologians via the *Decretum* of Gratian and the *Sentences* of Lombard. See Tentler (1977), pp. 7-9.

⁸³⁹ The relevant part of Augustine's Sermon 393 is cited in translation by Tentler (1977), p. 7-8: “A man who has done penance and been reconciled while he is healthy and afterwards has

of satisfaction were seen as a “proof” that the repentant was sincere; since these works were done in good health and freely, when they could, in principle, be neglected. The advice of Augustine was to abandon the uncertain and go for that which is safe. Similarly, the message of Suso’s dying man is: “O happy is penance and conversion made in due time, for it is safe (*secura*). For if a man betakes himself to penance at the last moment, this will be doubtful and uncertain (*dubius et incertus*), for he will not know whether he is truly repenting or merely feigning (*nescit utrum vere an fecte paeniteat*).”⁸⁴⁰

For Augustine too, penitence while in good health was certain,⁸⁴¹ because confession would then be followed by works of satisfaction that were performed freely. This was a ‘proof’ of sincere motivation.⁸⁴²

The fear of the unprepared man resembles the theological concept of *timor servilis*, in the sense that he illustrates a fear of retribution rather than a fear of separation (*timor filialis* or *timor castus*). However, the point with *timor servilis* is usually its potential of being developed into a *timor filialis*.⁸⁴³ Suso’s point in this vision is to portray a desperate fear in an extreme situation and that this cannot develop further. The “hawk’s talons” and the man’s inability to turn around illustrates this paralysis.

A contrast is constructed between sincere or true (*verus*) and false (*fictus*) repentance. This aspect is seen again later in the text, as the Disciple asks what he should do to prepare: *vera contritio* is the first element, to be followed by full confession and works of satisfaction. The message is that repentance and the other

lived well, leaves here sure. But a man who does penance at the end and is reconciled, whether he leaves here sure, I am not sure.”

⁸⁴⁰ *Hor.* 532.1 *O felix penitentia et conversio matura, quia securo. Qui autem tarde paenitentiae se committit, dubius et incertus erit, quia nescit utrum vere an fecte paeniteat.*

⁸⁴¹ As medieval theologians continued this discussion, the wording changed from Augustine’s *certum* to *secura*, which is the word used by Suso. See Tentler (1977), p. 9, n. 8; for the history of the concepts *certitudo* / *securitas* in Western theology from late Antiquity to the Middle Ages, see Schrimm-Heins (1991).

⁸⁴² See Tentler (1977), pp. 14-15.

⁸⁴³ See a good example of articulation of the idea of *timor servilis* in *Hor.* II, 7, 595.26: Renewal of love with their sweetest bride (*dulcissima sponsa*), “whom they before used to serve, with fear, as a master *cui prius servire solebant tamquam domino per timorem*. The same ideal development from slave-fear to love is reflected in the Eucharist chapter, see *Watch* 273; *Hor.* 554.25-28.

elements of penitence and the other means of preparation must be achieved in good time (*O felix paenitentia et conversio matura*).

The dying man would rather that he had not been born "...than that I should have spent so uselessly the time given to me for penitence, and that I squandered it in pride!"⁸⁴⁴ He laments his incomplete satisfaction.⁸⁴⁵ Life and good health is "time given ... for penitence," opportunities that must not be spent to no use (*inutiliter expendi*). From his point of view, even a single Hail Mary would have been immensely valuable.⁸⁴⁶ Thus, we can observe that the heart of the message in Suso's very strict *Ars moriendi*, that it will eventually be too late, is also balanced with a more positive admonition that reoccurs throughout the *Horologium*: the encouragement to do simple devotional exercises, preferably on a daily basis and with a sincere motivation, so as to maintain a life of devotional fervor.⁸⁴⁷

The excessive fear of the afterlife dominates the mind and disturbs the *motivation* for confession. The discussion on repentance and conversion suggests another theological concept is at play, namely attrition, which in a sense corresponds to *timor servilis*, in that it is related to fear of retribution. A penitent who was *attritus* was motivated by fear and the idea was, among many theologians, that the sacrament of penance and the power given to the priest (the power of the 'keys') would then turn attrition into contrition.⁸⁴⁸ The words of the Disciple, *sufficit ad salutem*, may suggest an attritionist position.⁸⁴⁹ God would look with

⁸⁴⁴ Watch 247: *Hor.* 531.11-12 *tempus mihi ad paenitentiam concessum tam inutiliter expendi*.

⁸⁴⁵ Watch 255-56 ; *Hor.* 538.18-20 *O si sic mortuus fuisset, vel si iam decederem, quantam in me ignis ille materiam invenisset, propter peccatorum multitudinem et incompletam satisfactionem*.

⁸⁴⁶ Watch 249 *quam nunc minima opera satisfactoria mihi grata et accepta essent*.

⁸⁴⁷ Watch 249 "Listen carefully to me now, I implore. See, at this moment I should find more joy in some little short prayer, such as the Hail Mary, which I said devoutly, than over 'thousands of gold and silver pieces.' [Ps 118.72]" *Hor.* 532.22-24 *Attendite ad me nunc, quaeso, diligenter. Ecce in hac hora magis gauderem de brevi oratiuncula, puta salutatione angelica devote per me dicta, quam 'super milia auri et argenti'*. Chapter seven in book two, one of the parts that are only found in the *Horologium* (and not in the previous *Bdew*), is the main source as far as daily prayer exercises are concerned. See the introduction to this study.

⁸⁴⁸ See Grosse (1994), p. 184.

⁸⁴⁹ It is exactly these words that are used later in Jean Gerson's text in relation to repentance on the deathbed. See Rädle (2003), p. 726. In later *Ars moriendi* texts, especially that of Gerson, the deathbed becomes an occasion for a "perfect" last penance, as demonstrated in Hamm

mercy upon a repentant sinner, even if he was disturbed by fear and hence would perhaps not be fully contrite. Again, we see in Suso's text that the fear of the dying man is so extreme that the very possibility of repentance at all is rejected, since it would be too uncertain. In a sense, then, this is a death fully outside the dominion of God's grace.

Apparently, an inordinate fear like that of Suso's unprepared man leaves no room for the necessary sincerity and desire for God that enables *vera contritio*. Like Augustine, Suso underlines that the penitent should be healthy. Repentance while in good health was certain in terms of motivation because it was followed by acts of satisfaction that were voluntary—people had to perform penitence while it could still be neglected—and thus driven by a sincere wish to improve, whereas deathbed confession could potentially be motivated only by fear of retribution. Suso's position resembles that of Augustine, but there is also an interesting difference that we should observe. For Augustine, who spoke from the point of view of the pastor, the uncertainty of deathbed penitence was related to whether the priest could ensure full reconciliation. For Suso, the uncertainty of deathbed penance is treated from the point of view of the sinner who despairs his own state before God at the crucial moment of departure. That is to say, the attention is focused on the conscience and sincerity of the individual rather than on the certainty of the 'system'. In the fashion of interiorized piety and radical moralism, Suso has little to say about the part of the sacrament that involves the priest.⁸⁵⁰

As this chapter is for the most part a strictly deterrent work of fiction intended for life improvement rather than for the actual deathbed situation, it is difficult to say from this what Suso considered as necessary deathbed conduct. However the passage that shows adherence to the position of Augustine—albeit without the part on reconciliation—indicates that Suso had his doubts about deathbed penitence.

(2009), pp. 308-9. This presupposes that if the repentant sinner would do his or her best—even as fear was causing disturbance to the motivation—and the power of the sacrament and the *grata cooperans* would turn it into a worthy contrition.

⁸⁵⁰ See Leppin (2001), for a similar attitude of relativization of the institutional aspect or element of the sacrament in Johannes Tauler. See also Hamm (2009), p. 48.

Solitary Death

I now want to address how Suso, with his *imago mortis*, “image of death,” draws on traditional elements but uses these elements in an innovative way. An aspect of Suso’s text that we can observe is that it portrays a *solitary death*.⁸⁵¹ The dying man complains that his friends abandoned him when his illness became too grave. Except for the demons that emerge toward the end, the Disciple sees only this man in the vision. Solitary death is a motive that can be seen in earlier edifying tales, *exempla* from monastic traditions. Let us consider, for instance, the *Dialogus miraculorum* of Caesarius of Heisterbach, a work that was mentioned above for its influence on later medieval Afterlife thought. In these dialogues we find numerous stories of death scenes, a standard ingredient in monastic literature, and among them also some stories about bad deaths, which allow us to make a few observations.

The first part of the *Dialogus* of Caesarius recalls the horrible death of a novice named Benneco.⁸⁵² Benneco, it is said, did not follow the monastic rule and in various ways he was tempted. When he became sick and was about to die, horrible winds began to blow around the house and ravens appeared. The other brothers who stood around the deathbed then became afraid and it is said that they abandoned him, all but an old woman. It is emphasized that Benneco died in secular clothes, and without any sign of repentance.⁸⁵³

The *exempla* of Caesarius are usually followed by a short discussion between the monk (i.e., Caesarius) and a novice. In this case, the wind and the ravens are soon identified as demons. Benneco had broken the vows and returned to the world *sicut canis ad vomitum*, “Like a dog to [its] vomit,” and now he dies a bad death. We are not told what happens further. The story simply ends with the

⁸⁵¹ *Watch* 251; *Hor.* 534.15-32.

⁸⁵² *Dialogus miraculorum* 1.15, pp. 248-53.

⁸⁵³ *Dialogus miraculorum* 1.15, p. 248.25-26: *diem clausit extremum, nullum poenitentiae demonstrans indicium.*

message *Ecce quali morte moriuntur, qui a Deo recedunt*, “See what kind of death he dies who turns away from God.”⁸⁵⁴

In another of his *exempla* Caesarius portrays the horrible death of a man named Gerung,⁸⁵⁵ a treasurer who had been hard against the poor. When Gerung is on his deathbed, demons in the form of vultures and large black men, “awaiting the souls of the dying like meat,” begin to appear.⁸⁵⁶ It is said that Gerung then put on the religious habit, but “more out of fear of Hell than out of love for the heavenly fatherland.”⁸⁵⁷

The stories of the Cistercian Caesarius have a distinctly monastic profile. They were intended primarily for novices of his order, and they usually convey a specific point related to monastic life. The first story about Benneco is a tale of someone who breaks the vows and returns to the world and who dies unrepentant.⁸⁵⁸ In the case of Gerung, the story is about someone who behaved badly in life and put on the monk’s habit out of fear of Hell,⁸⁵⁹ that is, about the importance of having the right inner motivation. Both stories, however, are about *solitary* death. Gerung is explicitly dying *alone* (*solus*), whereas Benneco is abandoned by everyone but an old woman. In both stories, the main characters have *turned away from God* and are consequently dying solitary deaths.

In medieval monastic literature, the death of a brother or sister is usually an important communal happening. Several of the orders followed a ritual of knocking on a *tabula*, a wooden board, to announce the near death of a member; this signal called on all the other inhabitants to abandon whatever tasks they were attending and rush to the deathbed.⁸⁶⁰ Crowded death scenes are standard elements

⁸⁵⁴ *Dialogus miraculorum* 1.15, p. 250.1-2.

⁸⁵⁵ *Dialogus miraculorum* 11.15, pp. 2084-86.

⁸⁵⁶ *Dialogus miraculorum* 11.15, pp. 2086.3-4: *qui morientium animas quasi escam praestolantur*

⁸⁵⁷ *Dialogus miraculorum* 11.15, pp. 2084.23-24: *magis timore gehennae quam amore patriae habitum induens*.

⁸⁵⁸ *Dialogus miraculorum* 1.15, p. 250.2-3 *Ecce quali morte moriuntur, qui a Deo recedunt*. The title of the distinction clearly states the issue: *quod non liceat noviciis redire ad saeculum post votum*. 248.16-17

⁸⁵⁹ *Dialogus miraculorum* 11.15, pp. 2084.23-24 (...) *timore gehennae* (...) *habitum induens*.

⁸⁶⁰ See Bonniwell (1945), p. 188. See also Caesarius’ *Dialogus* 11.16.

in monastic literature and hagiography,⁸⁶¹ and we often see that not only the monastic community but also angels, saints and demons appear. Consider, for instance, the legend of the death of Virgin Mary.⁸⁶² This was the ideal death in medieval thought, a densely populated scene, which brings together the living, the saints, and angels. The moment of death was critical, as the demons of Hell were said to lie in wait and try to snatch the soul, and the saints and angels, and also the community, are protecting the soul in this critical moment, seeing to its safe journey. Hence, a solitary death is *exposed* to the dangerous forces of Hell. Similar to Benneco and Gerung in the stories of Caesarius, also Suso's unprepared man is abandoned on his deathbed and sees demons surrounding him as he is about to draw his last breath:

See how I am surrounded with savage beasts, with spectral demons' faces, with countless black Ethiopians, lurking and lying in wait for my unhappy soul as it hovers on the point of its departure to the next world, if perhaps it may be delivered to them to torment.⁸⁶³

We can imagine that for Suso and his audience, the idea of solitary death gave strong and negative associations. The solitary deaths presented by Caesarius are results of exceptional cases of lack of monastic discipline. He conveys a message to his audience (of novices) about obedience and loyalty to the community, the commitment to the habit, and so on. Solitary death suggests an exceptional break with the community and hence it disrupts the standard pattern of communal death celebration. For Suso, the solitary death-scene envisioned by the Disciple is *not* an exceptional break with a community. Quite the opposite, it is merely one out of innumerable cases of unprepared death under the 'present' conditions.⁸⁶⁴ In a

⁸⁶¹ In a context much closer to Suso, we can mention the Dominican Sister-Books, where crowded death scenes and celebrations of death are standard elements in the stories of the first generations of Dominican nuns. See a summary of this theme in Lewis (1994), pp 246-50.

⁸⁶² See Schreiner (1995).

⁸⁶³ *Watch* 254; *Hor.* 536.26-29.

⁸⁶⁴ See especially *Watch* 251-2: "And just as there are now so very few to be found to feel compunction for my words and reform their lives, so one will find almost no one, the times are truly so ill, spiritual fervor is so wanting and there is so much malice abroad in this world that grows old, who is so perfectly prepare for death that he lives with a heart so withdrawn and devoted, longs with all his might to die and to have eternal life and 'to be with Christ'[Phil 1.23]" *Hor.* 535.3-9 *Et sicut nunc pauci valde inveiuntur, qui ex verbis meis compuncti vitam suam in melius*

sense, the whole pattern is inverted; a well-prepared man is now a rarity. Rather than a break with the community, Suso's vision portrays the 'breakdown' of the whole community as such: it is presented as a symptom of the general dissolution of religious discipline. Suso's dialogue reflects a strong notion of religious life in crisis, as we have seen earlier in this study. To lament the present state of affairs was indeed not a new feature in Suso's time, but it is nonetheless intensified compared to the twelfth century and the time of the great monastic reformers.

Compared to Caesarius' rather simple tales, Suso's dialogue is an intense confrontation with an "image of death," a close-up rendering with far more psychological depth. The style is very different in these two authors, as can be expected as they lived in different times and under different conditions. However, Suso retains a basic element that was rooted in this period's religious culture: the fear of solitary death and of exposure to demons. Having turned away from God, death becomes desolate and dangerous. With these elements, he developed a clear-cut 'meditative device.' The point in Suso is not the particular death of one man due to his transgressions, but the phenomenon or state of unpreparedness, which culminates in horrible death. An element which in a monastic setting was a concrete violation of the rule is in Suso's dialogue *intensified* and made into a general and existential theme.⁸⁶⁵ For Suso the distinction between *religiosi* and *saeculi homines* seems less important.⁸⁶⁶ His dying man has not done any particularly bad deeds like the ones on Caesarius' stories, but he has lived what is presented as a fairly normal life within the 'present situation.'

corrigant sic revera propter malitiam temporis et defectum fervoris spiritualis, ac mundi sensecentis malignitatem, paucissimi reperiuntur tam perfecte ad mortem dispositi, qui in tanta abstractione et cordis devotione existant, ut prae desiderio vitae aeternae mori cupiant 'et cum Christo esse' totis visceribus concupiscant.

⁸⁶⁵ See Hamm (1999).

⁸⁶⁶ *Watch* 243; *Hor.* 527.18-21 *Sed pro dolor in nonnullis religiosis, sicut et in saeculi hominibus vanis, valde multos invenies, qui mortem hanc tantum abhorrent, ut vix eius memoriam admittere velint. Discedere de hoc mundo nolunt, quia scire mori nondum didicerunt.*

Death and the Afterlife

In the last part of the dialogue, the unprepared man approaches the moment of his departure and he begins to feel the “sting of death” (*puncturae mortis*). His breath fails, he grows pale, his hands begin to stiffen, and so on.⁸⁶⁷ At the same time, the afterlife begins to dominate his field of vision, and thus the text becomes intense with ‘glimpses’ into the Afterlife. Since we are considering death and eschatology here, this culmination of the death chapter deserves to be quoted in full. The dying man’s final words are as follows:

O, anguish and deathly oppression of my heart! Feel how my pulse begins to fluctuate, my breath to fail and come in gasps. No longer do I see the light of this world, and now I begin to see in my mind’s eye, as if I were meditating, what the next world will be like. O my God, what a wretched sight! See how I am surrounded with savage beasts, with spectral demons’ faces, with countless black Ethiopians, lurking and lying in wait for my unhappy soul as it hovers on the point of its departure to the next world, if perhaps it may be delivered to them to torment.

O strictest of judges, how dire are your judgments, how heavily, as you judge my wretched soul, do you weigh those sins which most men do not even care about because they seem so petty. This is the sweat of death, suffusing my limbs and attesting that nature is conquered and now expires. O, terrible sight of the just Judge, already present in my fears, soon himself to appear to me! Farewell now, my companions and dearest friends, for now I am to leave you. I turn my mind’s eye to purgatory, to which I am now to be led off, and from which I shall not be released until I have ‘paid the uttermost farthing.’ [Mt 5.25]

From there with the eye of my heart I see misery and sorrow, pain and manifold affliction. Alas for me, wretched as I am, among the other torments earned in that place I see mounting flames of fire, and some miserable souls being lapped in them and plunged back again, running to and fro in the midst of that white-hot fire like sparks spitting flame, as when the whole of some great house were set on fire, and among the flames and the smoke there were sparks everywhere rising and falling; and they wail and cry aloud, tormented with suffering, each of them saying: “Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you, my friends. [Jb 19.21] Where is now the help of my friends? Where are the fair promises of my kinsmen and the others for whose sake, in our inordinate love for them, we have neglected ourselves, and have heaped this torment upon us? Alas, why did we do so? We toiled wanting to please them, and we have been ill repaid. We burn and we scorch, but we have received no help from them. Alas, why did we not provide

⁸⁶⁷ *Watch* 253; *Hor* 536.16-22.

for our own salvation? For the least affliction which we suffer in this purgatory exceeds every torment of that mortal world. A single hour of this which we endure is reckoned to have in its cruel punishments a hundred years of the miseries of that passing world. But more than every other kind of torment, the absence of that divine and most joyous countenance wounds us most.' Now that I am in my last agony, I leave these things to you as my memorial, and, having said them, I expire in agony.⁸⁶⁸

This rich passage demonstrates Suso's style of writing. We recall that this dialogue and the appearance of the dying man is in itself a vision within the main dialogue between the Disciple and Eternal Wisdom. Here the dialogue gives way to yet another 'visionary layer' and new voices, the poor suffering souls in purgatory.

Death is a threshold; the soul "hovers on the point of its departure." Demons surrounding the deathbed is a typical feature in late medieval *Ars moriendi* books, often portrayed as series of various *tentationes* or *anfechtungen*—diabolic tempta-

⁸⁶⁸ Watch 253-55; Hor. 536.22-537.26 *O cordis angustiae et pressurae mortiferae. En pulsus incipit caprisare, halitus deficere et quasi ex profundo se colligere. Lucem huius mundi amplius non video, et ecce iam statum alterius mundi prae oculis mentalibus quasi meditando prospicere incipio. O mi Deus, quam miserabilis aspectus. En cruentae bestiae, larvales daemonum facies, nigri Aethiopes innumerabiles circumdant me, insidiantes et expectantes miseram animam, in proximo exituram, si forte torquenda eis in sortem tradatur.*

O districtissime iudex, quam severissima sunt iudicia tua, quam multum ponderas in iudicando me miserum ea, quae pro sui modicitate pauci etiam curare praesumunt. En sudor mortis adest, membra penetrans et victam esse naturam et iam succubuisse attestans. O terribilis aspectus iusti iudicis mihi iam praesentis per timorem, subito venturus per exhibitionem. Nunc valete socii et amici carissimi, quia hinc iam exiturus, oculum mentis ad purgatorium, quo iam deducendus sum, converto, inde non exiturus, usque dum 'reddam minimum quadrantem.'

Illinc oculo cordis intueor miseriam et dolorem, poenam et afflictionem multiplicem. Heu me miserum, ibi inter alias poenas illi loco debitas exsurgere video flammam ignium, et involvere et reimpingere quasdam animas miserorum, quae velut scintillae flammivomae in medio ignis candentis surcurrunt, sicut cum magna villa tota in incendio ponitur, et in igne et fumo scintillae pariter sursum ac deorsum feruntur, ululantes et prae dolore cruciatuum clamantes singulae ac dicentes: 'Miseremini mei, miseremini mei, saltem vos, amici mei.' Ubi est nunc amicorum meorum adiutorium? Ubi sunt promissiones bonae consanguineorum et aliorum, per quorum inordinatum affectum nos ipsos negleximus et hanc poenam nobismet ipsis audaximus? Heu cur hoc fecimus? Laboravimus placere eis volentes, et male remunerati sumus. Ardemus et aestuamus, nec ab eis adiutorium recipimus. Heu cur de salute nostra nobismet ipsis non providimus? En minor afflictio purgatorii huius, quod patimur, superat supplicium quodcumque illius mundi temporalis. Unicae horae istius, quam experimur, poenae acerbitas centum annos in se putatur habere saeculi transeuntis miseriae. Sed super omnia cetera tormentorum genera laedit nimium illius divinae faciei felicissimae absentia.' Haec in ultimo agone constitutus tibi pro memoriali relinquo; et his dictis agonizando exspiro.

tions.⁸⁶⁹ Here, the demons that are surrounding the deathbed are “countless.” The first two paragraphs illustrate how death is seen as a moment of *decision*. The Judge appears in the dying man’s fears already before he departs, and he is soon to stand before him. We recall from Chapter One in this study that particular judgment was thought to occur immediately after death. The judge, we see here, is the master of the Afterlife. His judgment is the ‘organizing principle.’ On other occasions where the judge is mentioned, such as in the *tribulatio* chapters or in the dialogue with the Virgin Mary (I, 16), the judge is to a certain degree impressible and his strictness can be mitigated.⁸⁷⁰ In this case, there is no such possibility: from the point of view of an unprepared man, the judge weighs heavily the pettiest sins. Earlier in the same text, the idea of the judge is expressed in combination with *shame*, as the dying man anticipates his own appearance before the judge and his court: “Ah, eternal God, with what shame shall I stand before you and all the saints to be judged, when I am made to give an account of what I have done and failed to do. What shall I have to say?”⁸⁷¹ This is a feature in Suso that we should note: for him, shame and submission is not related to the encounter with the priest and the confessional sacrament, which has been observed as a primary pattern in the “religion of conscience” in this period.⁸⁷² Shame is related to the immediate personal and mental submission before God and his court by way of anticipation. Rather than an emphasis on institutional mediation, we see that inner encounter by way of mental anticipation of the afterlife has a strong prevalence in the piety that Suso accommodates.⁸⁷³

The creatures of Hell, the ghostly demons and the Black Ethiopians, are threatening the man in his last agony, but it is clear from the text that he is to go to Purgatory, and not Hell. The paragraph that follows is the most elaborate treatment of Purgatory in the *Horologium* altogether. It was mentioned earlier that the

⁸⁶⁹ See Rudolf (1957), p. 116.

⁸⁷⁰ See Chapter One, pp. 105-10.

⁸⁷¹ *Watch* 249; *Hor.* 532.19-21 *Ah Deus aeternae, quam verecunde coram te et sanctis omnibus ad iudicium stabo, cum reddere rationem de transactis commissis et omissis cogor. Et quid adhuc dicam?*

⁸⁷² Tentler (1977), p. 347.

⁸⁷³ Berndt Hamm outlines two main profiles of theology of piety, the exteriorized and the interiorized way of accessing grace. See, e.g., Hamm (2009), esp. p. 48.

distinction between Hell and purgatory sometimes can seem unclear in the *Horologium*.⁸⁷⁴ Purgatory is referred to as *eternal*, gloomy dungeon, pit of death and so on.⁸⁷⁵ In the quoted text above, however, it is clear that the unprepared man's soul is bound for Purgatory, which is clearly distinguished from Hell. We can see that the demons that are mentioned, are clearly not part of the idea of purgatorial fire, but come from Hell and attempt to snatch the soul away *before* it is led into purgation.⁸⁷⁶ Purgatory entails immense torment, but unlike in Hell, there is an end to it. Purgatory had attained some of Hell's features, it had become 'infernalized,' but they are clearly also distinct concepts. Suso subscribes to many elements that were common in 'Purgatory theory.' It is, generally speaking, a place of torment and "manifold affliction".⁸⁷⁷ Its key ingredient is fire: "mounting flames of fire," "white-hot fire," it is like "some great house set on fire," and with "sparks everywhere rising and falling."⁸⁷⁸ We learn from the words of the suffering souls that one hour of torment in Purgatory equals "a hundred years of the miseries of that passing world."⁸⁷⁹ This is a common way of describing the relationship of earthly and purgatorial time, although Suso's figures are higher than in many accounts.⁸⁸⁰ Suso's formulation lies very close to Thomas Aquinas when it is said that the pains of purgatory exceeds any suffering in the world.⁸⁸¹ This immensity is stressed by Suso on several occasions. "But worse than any torment is the absence

⁸⁷⁴ For instance, early in the chapter, it is said that as death suddenly comes upon the unprepared, it wrestles their "wretched souls from their body and leads it off to hell (*Gehennam*)."
Watch 243; *Hor.* 527.23-25.

⁸⁷⁵ Suso also speaks of Purgatory in plural as fiery spheres or places of cleansing, see Book II, chapter seven. This is probably a remnant of an earlier conception of receptacles for awaiting souls, from a time before the ideas of Purgatory as one separate fiery place had emerged. For more on the ambiguity of Purgatory, see Le Goff (1984), pp. 301-2.

⁸⁷⁶ Generally demons were not 'admitted' into Purgatory, although some theologians thought that they were responsible for the torment there, Le Goff (1984).

⁸⁷⁷ The mentioned tendency of 'infernalization' of Purgatory can be seen in the wording "manifold affliction." There are, apparently, other types of torment in this Purgatory than flames, which also brings to mind the notion of Hell: a main point in portrayal of Hell is precisely the great *variety* of torment, as seen above, pp. 190-95.

⁸⁷⁸ This is fully in line with doctrine on Purgatory, as established by Albert the Great: Hell was designed to punish; Purgatory to purge, hence its name. Cf. Le Goff (1984), p. 261.

⁸⁷⁹ *Watch* 255; *Hor.* 537.22-24.

⁸⁸⁰ See Le Goff (1984), pp. 73-4.

⁸⁸¹ Künzle (1977), p. 496; *Watch* 254-5. See also I, 14, *Watch* 205.

of God.”⁸⁸² This is an important aspect of the idea of Purgatory: the deprivation of the vision of God.⁸⁸³

Jaques Le Goff thinks that: “Purgatory was one of the main reasons for the dramatization of the moment of death.”⁸⁸⁴ It is easy to see that the idea of Purgatory is very close at hand in the portrayal of death in Suso’s text. The horrifying vision makes the Disciple open his eyes and see things more clearly, and its strong impression makes him fear purgatory.⁸⁸⁵ This gives him motivation to prepare for death.

What is Death Preparation?

The Last Things are pressing on and are clearly threatening elements. But precisely because they were perceived as actual threats, they *had to* be evoked and kept present. Mental anticipation of the terrors of Judgment, Hell and Purgatory was the only way to prepare and thus to avoid them in the future. It has been observed that *Ars moriendi* literature, and Suso in particular, demonstrates a *finalization* and a call to let the thought of death pervade one’s life.⁸⁸⁶ We can say even more: Meditation on death and the afterlife means to ‘insert’ oneself mentally in future torment. We see namely that part of the dying man’s advice to the Disciple is: “in your heart think as if your soul were already in purgatory, and had received ten years of suffering ‘in a furnace of blazing fire’ [Dn 3.11] for its sins, and that this one year had been granted to you in which to help yourself.” He exhorts: “Con-

⁸⁸² *Watch* 255; *Hor.* 537.24-25 *Sed super omnia cetera tormentorum genera laedit minimum illius divinae faciei felicissimae absentia.*

⁸⁸³ This influential idea was expressed in Alexander of Hales’ *Glossa* of Lombard’s *Sentences* (1220’s). See Le Goff (1984), p. 247. Caesarius of Heisterbach asserted that the easiest type of purgation was the one that ‘merely’ awaits the final *visio Dei*. The thought of deprivation of the *visio Dei* in the afterlife is seen also in Suso’s Hell chapter: the absence of God forever is the worst fate. See above, pp. 190-95.

⁸⁸⁴ Le Goff (1984), p. 293.

⁸⁸⁵ *Watch* 256 “... I cared so little about unprepared death and the vast torments of purgatory (...) But now with your fatherly warning I open my eyes and fear purgatory’s torments very greatly.” *Hor.* 538.29-539.3 *eo quod mortem indispositam et poenam purgatorii immensam tam parum curavi; et quam magna sapientia est, saepius prae oculis habere ista. Sed nunc paterne admonitus, oculos aperio, et ipsam vehementer pertimesco.*

⁸⁸⁶ Hamm (2007a), p. 307.

sider the sorrows and terrors that you have seen in me, and think of those that will come to you in the next world.”

The Disciple is encouraged to anticipate his soul’s suffering in purgatory and to converse with it in this state. Thus instead of relying on others for help, the devotee can help himself by ‘inserting’ his own soul in future torment:

So look often at your soul, burning within fiery spheres, and listen to its wretched voice, calling to you and saying: ‘O dearest of all my friends, rescue me, your unhappy soul. Remember a prisoner, have pity on me, and give me help in my desolation. Do not allow me to be afflicted longer in this gloomy dungeon. There is no one to show himself loyal, no one to stretch out his hand to this pauper. They all ‘seek the things that are their own,’ [Phil 2.21] and they leave me desolate to the avenging flames.’”⁸⁸⁷

Visions are images and figures of identification, spiritual devices created for mental immersion. The poor souls in Hell (I, 10), or the poor souls in Purgatory that emerge from the dying man’s imagination, are really mirror images of the Disciple, or the reader, who experiences them. At the end of the chapter, Eternal Wisdom speaks of the innumerable crowds that have suffered unprepared deaths and have departed: “Look on them, speak with them, and count yourself an old man who has departed with them. Ask them all, enquire from one and another, and they will teach you.”⁸⁸⁸

With Suso’s *imago mortis*, that is, the vision of the dying man, we certainly find a strong focus of attention toward the deathbed and the final moment of life. However, the associative power and ‘depth’ of this *imago* is fascinating. As we have seen, the image of death does not only portray the dying man’s last agonies, but gives way to further mental images, especially of afterlife torment and the demonic creatures that emerge just before he departs. Additional images of the afterlife are ‘attached’ to the *imago mortis*, the idea of death. Within one visionary

⁸⁸⁷ Watch 250-51; Hor. 534.6-14 *Sic igitur ipsam crebrius intueri inter flammeos globos ardentem, et attende vocem ipsius miserabilem ad te clamantem et dicentem: ‘O amicorum omnium dilectissime, succurre miserae animae tuae. Memento incarcerati, misere mihi, et praebe auxilium desolato. Ne diutius me permittas affligi in hoc carcere caliginoso, quia derelictus sum ab hoc mundo. Non est qui fidelitatem ostendat, non est qui manum porrigat egenti. Singuli, ‘quae sua sunt, quaerunt,’ et me ultricibus flammis desolatum derelinquunt.’*

⁸⁸⁸ Watch 257; Hor. 539.31 *Hos intueri, ipsos alloquere, et veterem hominem cum ipsis reputa transisse. Interroga omnes, quare a singulis, et docebunt te.*

layer, further images emerge; the *meditatio mortis* entails the whole spectrum of mental images of the *novissima*, the ‘Last Things.’⁸⁸⁹

The advice is not only to prepare by meditating on the image of death, but also to anticipate one’s own death and judgment and punishment, so as to make use of this renewed ‘afterlife sensitivity’ for the benefit of one’s soul. This way of thinking is very similar to the ancient ideal made known by Gregory the Great, namely that religious persons were to act *as if* they were sinners deserving of severe punishment. To anticipate one’s future punishments, even if these were not deserved, was considered a safe strategy for ‘advanced’ religious, who knew that they had lived better lives than most, but who, just because of this, needed a ‘device,’ a safeguard against *spuerbia*, arrogance and false certainty of salvation. This is seen already in the classic source of western monasticism, the *Regula Magistri*: at the pinnacle of the ladder of humility, the monk should “consider himself guilty of his sins and picture himself already present at the terrible judgment that is to come.”⁸⁹⁰

From the point of view of the dying man, a short moment in good health appears as an immensely valuable opportunity to gain “spiritual wealth,” an opportunity he, and countless others, did not take. “Why did I apply myself to vanity, and why did I not learn all my life long to die?”⁸⁹¹

In his various treatments of the ‘elements of piety,’ such as the ideal of patient endurance of hardships, Eucharist devotion, or daily prayer and exercises, Suso is concerned with the problem of *perseverance*.⁸⁹² The occasional state of “spiritual consolation” brings about good intention and joy in performing spiritual exercises and good works. However, such an uplifted state is necessarily limited in duration.⁸⁹³ In various ways, Suso depicts the instability of spiritual life and tries to counteract this with means of arousing fervor and “renewing” the love of

⁸⁸⁹ See *Watch* 257 “O, how happy is the man who makes provision for these last things,” *Hor.* 540.2-3 *O quam felix, qui haec novissima providet.*

⁸⁹⁰ See Bernstein (2000). See also Chapter Two in this study.

⁸⁹¹ *Watch* 247; *Hor.* 530.28 *Quare studui vanitati, et quare non tota vita mea didici mori?*

⁸⁹² See Chapter One, pp. 54-55.

⁸⁹³ See Chapter One and the concluding discussion in the current chapter.

God. Strategies such as frequent recollection of the passion (Book I, 14), various simple prayers and exercises (Book II, 7), inner identification with Christ in suffering (Book I, 9 and 13), these strategies all have the purpose of arousing or *maintaining* a state of devotional fervor. This is so because, as he says in Book I, “humans so easily forget.”⁸⁹⁴ The dangers of sin are never far away. As the ‘school chapter’ vividly illustrates, the opportunities for sin abounds particularly in the present time, in the “aging world.”⁸⁹⁵ Even for the most devout of humans, the outcome of life is fundamentally uncertain because, as we learn in Book I, chapter twelve, people may “change their own free will” and turn away from God at any moment.⁸⁹⁶

With this fundamental insight in mind, and with a deep concern for the dangers of spiritual decay, Suso drew on the power of images to create another edifying “device” that could counteract these dangers and secure a perseverance of pious motivation. The chapter on unprepared death not only presents a most useful teaching, but it does this in the form of an *imago*, which is to be imprinted in the heart⁸⁹⁷ and give shape and direction to inner life.⁸⁹⁸ The unprepared man is consistently referred to as an *imago mortis*, an “image of death,” and also as a *similitudo*, “similitude” or “likeness” of death, which is to remain fixed in the heart (*in corde tuo semper fixa permaneat*). The dying man also refers to himself

⁸⁹⁴ See *Watch* 322 “(...) because the human spirit so easily forgets what it has undertaken, unless it is often renewed in its undertakings.” *Hor.* 598.2-3 *Animus quippe humanus facillime a coeptis labitur, nisi frequenter in coeptis renovatur.*

⁸⁹⁵ *Watch* 234-41; *Hor.* 519-26.

⁸⁹⁶ Another part from chapter twelve in book I, illustrates this problem: Here Suso speaks of a man “holy as if he were Christ’s own brother” who simply turns away and fall into Hell “to be damned to eternity”, while another man comes out of a brothel “with a contrite heart and joining the company of the angels.” *Watch* 174; *Hor.* 470.7-10 *Videas hunc de reclusorio veluti de Christi consortio aversum a summo bono, ruere in infernum aeternaliter damnandum; illum autem exire de prostibulo corde contrito, et angelorum iungi collegio aeternaliter salvandum.*

⁸⁹⁷ For more on the heart in Suso’s works, see Fenten (2007), pp. 80-100.

⁸⁹⁸ *Watch* 243 “And so that this teaching of mine may move you more powerfully and remain always fixed in your heart, I shall expound the mystery of this teaching to you in an illustration that you can understand, which will be of great profit for you for the beginnings of salvation, and for laying a firm foundation for all virtues. So consider this similitude of a dying man, who as he is dying is talking to you.” *Hor.* 527.29-528.4 *Et ut ardentius te mea haec doctrina moveat et in corde tuo semper fixa permaneat, ideo sub exemplo sensibili doctrinae huius mysterium tibi tradam, quod tibi valde proderit ad salutis initium et ad cunctarum virtutum proficiet stabile fundamentum. Vide ergo nunc similitudinem hominis morientis, et tecum pariter loquentis.*

in a similar way: “Often keep before your eyes this my sorrowful image which you are looking at; constantly call it to mind, and at once you will know that my teaching will be most profitable.”⁸⁹⁹ On another occasion in the chapter, he says: “Only do this: remember me well every day, think carefully of my words...” The Disciple reacts in an exemplary way when he says toward the end of the chapter that; “Truly I believe that this terrifying vision will always be of help to my soul.”⁹⁰⁰ “Always,” “constantly,” “often,” “every day,” the image of death is to be kept present.

Ultimately, the question of perseverance was a question of whether one would *die in peace with God*.⁹⁰¹ The death that is portrayed in the chapter is all but peaceful. In order to counteract the dangers of falling into sin, and as the time of death’s arrival is uncertain,⁹⁰² Suso insists that the thought of death and the actions of preparation must be a constant matter.

This encouragement to mentally anticipate death and the afterlife can be observed not only in Suso’s chapter on death; in fact it describes much of the teaching in the *Horologium* as a whole, where the thought of individual judgment and afterlife punishment, The Last Things, are often evoked in order to shape the pattern of piety and inner life. Death preparation means to cultivate an inner *habitus* of eschatological awareness, a ‘death mentality’ if you like. As the advice goes in one of the small ‘spiritual compendia’ that are found in Book I: “Be as a man who is about to depart from this world.”⁹⁰³

As we have seen, the motive of solitary death was not new, but it is presented in a new way. It is interesting to note that what has been asserted by many as

⁸⁹⁹ *Watch* 252; *Hor.* 535.18-20 *hanc meam, quam vides, tristem personam frequenter oculis tuis obicias et ad memoriam iugiter reducas, et statim sentries doctrinam meam tibi fore utilissimam. 23-25 hoc tantum facias, ut me cotidie profunde recogites; verba mea diligenter advetas, et ea in corde tuo conscribas.*

⁹⁰⁰ *Watch* 255; *Hor.* 538.7-8 *Ego pro certo credo, quod haec horrenda visio semper valebit animae meae.*

⁹⁰¹ See Grosse (1994), p. 35; 39. In *Horologium* I, 12, this fear is suggested: *Watch* 175: about why God allows “a lamb to stray back again,” and did not “let it pass” while its “intentions were still holy.” *Hor.* 471.14-18.

⁹⁰² *Watch* 257; *Hor.* 540.6-7 *quia pro certo nescis, quia hora veniet et quam prope est.*

⁹⁰³ *Watch* 215; *Hor.* 505.26-27 *...tenere quasi homo, qui in procinctu migraturus est de hoc mundo.*

the most significant and innovative aspects of later medieval thought on death, namely the tendency of the extreme concentration toward the moment of death, is in part a revival of a much older source. The main message of the chapter, the exhortation to think frequently about death in life, is directly inspired by Arsenius, Suso's favorite among the Desert Fathers. Arsenius is presented as the ideal of someone who constantly kept the "hour of death" in his mind through life.⁹⁰⁴

Penitence, Conversion, and Asceticism

The idea of death preparation is a general concern in medieval religiosity,⁹⁰⁵ but the claim to prepare and to internalize the thought of death was greatly intensified in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In terms of practice, the ideal of death preparation is often unspecified. It can simply mean a strengthened piety, which gives renewed intensity to normal religious practices.

Death preparation can also be formulated as practice more specifically. The most common means of preparation is some form of *penitence*. Suso's dying man stresses that life, and particularly, youth, is a "time given ... for penitence."⁹⁰⁶ As the dialogue and the lamentation of the dying man proceeds and the Disciple begins to realize the dangers of unpreparedness,⁹⁰⁷ he wants to prepare himself, and he asks for advice. Thus, we get to see in more detail what is meant by death preparation in practice. Let us consider this advice given by the unprepared dying man:

The best advice, the greatest prudence and the most forethought consists in this, that you dispose yourself by true contrition and pure and complete confession while you are healthy and strong, and by worthy satisfaction, and shun all the poi-

⁹⁰⁴ *Watch* 252-3; *Hor.* 535.29.30 *O quam beatus es Arseni, qui semper hanc horam ante oculos habuisti*. In the *Vitas partum*, these words are spoken by Abbot Theophilus as he is about to die. See Colledge (1994), p. 252. See also Gnädinger (1998), pp. 121-26.

⁹⁰⁵ See Angenendt (2004), p. 107.

⁹⁰⁶ *Watch* 247. *Hor.* 531.11 *tempus (...) ad paenitentiam concessum*. Cf. *Watch* 256; *Hor.* 539.4-6 *Haec fili mi, dum adhuc iuvenis es et sanus ac robustus, et emendare vitam tuam poteris, omni tempore memorare*. *Watch* 247 "Spend the flower of your youth with God, occupy your time with holy deeds" *Hor* 531.3 *Florem iuventutis vestrae cum Deo expendite*.

⁹⁰⁷ *Watch* 255 "Nor in the whole of my life have I seen so plainly the perils of unprepared death." *Hor.* 538.5-7 *Neque enim tota vita mea sic evidenter adverti indispositae mortis pericula sicut in hac hora*.

sons and hindrances to your eternal salvation, and never cease at all times to behave as if you have to leave this world on this very day, or tomorrow, or at the latest within the week.⁹⁰⁸

The ideal of true contrition (*vera contritio*) gained importance in the “religion of conscience” that had developed in this period.⁹⁰⁹ With emphasis on *vera contritio*, Suso, in the voice of the dying man, underlines the necessity of inner sincerity. We should also notice that this ‘sum’ of preparation sets up a contrast to what we saw above concerning the problem of deathbed penitence. Whereas the dying man suggested that last minute repentance was potentially feigned (*ficte*), he now asserts *vera contritio* as a primary means of becoming disposed for death *in life*. It is underlined that one must be healthy and strong (*sanus et fortis*) in order to achieve this.⁹¹⁰ This passage provides a course of preparation and also summons what seem to be the central aspects of penitence for Suso. We notice that the dying man mentions contrition, confession and satisfaction, but not reconciliation. That is to say, he mentions all elements of the penitential sacrament except the one that directly involved the priest and the institution. This does not mean that Suso would want to dispel this aspect, but that it is not important to him in this case. The chain of elements, contrition, confession and satisfaction, presents a total solution. It is likely, considering what Suso elsewhere has to say about penance, that he considered it to be primarily an inner concern, a personal matter of inner confession where the devotee submits before God. The important thing, it seems, is not institutionally mediated reconciliation, but rather to cultivate a *penitential attitude* in the individual.

The idea of Purgatory was closely related to penitence; the mental exercise of immersion into future punishment performed by the Disciple and the dying man in these passages adds emphasis to the notion of personal guilt, however

⁹⁰⁸ *Watch* 250; *Hor.* 533.30-534.3 *optimum consilium, summa prudentia et maxima providentia in hoc consistit, ut per veram contritionem et puram ac integram confessionem te disponas, sanus et fortis, et per satisfactionem condignam; cuncta quoque noxia a salute aeterna te retrahentia ac impediencia proicias, et te iugiter omni tempore sic teneas ac si hodie in huius diei spatio vel cras vel ad longius in hac septimana discessurus sis de hoc mundo.*

⁹⁰⁹ Tentler (1977), p. 347.

⁹¹⁰ See above, pp. 210-12.

without this being connected to any specific transgression or crimes. “See how much I am wounded,” the Disciple says, with reference to the purgatorial suffering he has anticipated for himself, “...how much afflicted, how much tormented by my least faults; and what is to be done about the greatest?”⁹¹¹ The emphasis is on guilt as total and overwhelming. Sven Grosse has formulated this as a “guilt awareness of a higher order,” by which is meant a reinterpretation of the idea of guilt: from an emphasis on factual guilt as result of particular deeds, to an emphasis on the very human existence as one of guilt.⁹¹² Preparation means guilt awareness; it is as much an existential concern and a *perspective*, as it is concrete practice. Is a total concern, which enfolds as an existential “gesture of humility,” to say it with Grosse. Suso asserts a strict and demanding teaching on death and preparation, but, as will be seen in the next part, he also teaches that preparation can never be sufficient. Nevertheless, it must be a total concern. The emphasis on the immensity of guilt and the down-played aspect of institutionally mediated reconciliation, points, in turn, to the absolute need for an external force to take over where human accomplishment ends.

In the Disciple’s reaction to this vision toward the end of the chapter, we find another short passage that emphasizes penitence as means of death preparation. Here we see again that death preparation is a total concern, it means *conversion* to a life of penitence and asceticism. For the Disciple, the vision of death becomes an impetus to turn his life around and improve his behavior.⁹¹³ The thought of death, judgment and afterlife horror brings forth an acute desire for improvement, and ascetic rigor is an obvious solution. This new personal reorientation is expressed in terms of abstinence: “Take away, take away from me now

⁹¹¹ *Watch 255; Hor. 538.15-17 En tantum laedor, tantum affligior, tantum crucior de minimis; et quid fieret de maximis?*

⁹¹² Cf. Grosse (1994), pp. 135-36. Letter VI in Suso’s *Briefbuchlein* expresses this thought in the form of deathbed consolation to a dying nun, where it is stated that an early death is really not that bad, since “the older one gets, the more evil one becomes,” *ie elter, ie boeser. Exemplar 351; Bfb 380.22.*

⁹¹³ *Watch 255* “I intend to learn how to die, I do not want to put off my penitence, in no way do I wish to delay my conversion.” *Hor. 538.11-12 Discere mori propono, differe paenitentiam nolo, prolongare conversionem nullatenus volo.*

the luxuries of banqueting, costly array, and the sluggishness that holds me back.”⁹¹⁴

Asceticism, as seen in Suso’s chapter on death, does not mean the brutal type of self-mortification seen for instance in the Sister-Books, or in the first part of Suso’s *Vita*. The introduction to this study pointed to an unambiguous rejection in the *Horologium* of self-mortification. Death preparation in practice is simply a matter of giving life a new and distinct direction, abstaining from luxury, and leading a life of simplicity, enlivened devotion, and daily combat against sin. Yet, although moderate in comparison with some contemporary sources, Suso’s *Horologium* nonetheless conveys a fundamentally ascetic outlook. His formulations of a renewed life of holiness in terms of asceticism also point to the next chapter (II, 3), where Suso deals with spiritual life in strictness according to the model of the desert fathers, especially Arsenius and John Cassian.⁹¹⁵ As with so many of the tenets of late medieval theology of piety, Suso’s ideal of ascetic death preparation has deep monastic roots. Suso’s spirituality is driven by the *contemptus mundi* that had given shape to monastic life since its earliest days. The new element in the later Middle Ages was that now such ideal was applied to far wider audiences than before.⁹¹⁶ In the shape in which it is presented in the *Horologium*, the ideal does not require monastic affiliation. The task that the theologians of piety set for themselves was to apply such *praxis pietatis* to a large audience. Suso’s introduction to the ‘death book’ observes, we recall, that unpreparedness is a general tendency, regardless of religious profession. Death preparation is relevant for everyone.

⁹¹⁴ *Watch* 255; *Hor.* 538.14-15 *Tolle, tolle nunc a me lectisterniorum molliem, vestium pretiositatem, torporem somni me impediendem*. This formulation is more in line with the mystical idea of *gelazenheit*, however without any further elaboration of this thought.

⁹¹⁵ Although these ideals have a strong monastic embeddedness, it is important to remember that this type of ascetic rigor was expected also from lay, urban circles who, beginning in this period, sought a life of moral and ascetic strictness. Cf. Burger. However, that this asceticism is still relatively moderate, can be seen easily by comparing any of the statements concerning on point in the *Horologium* to the Sister-Books, or for that matter, the asceticism of the desert fathers, or to Suso’s own *Vita*. See Chapter One in this study. See also Gnädinger (1998), pp. 87-159, esp. pp. 132-33.

⁹¹⁶ See Hamm (2007a), p. 307.

Preparation for death does not entail practices that were not already part of religious life. However, these practices are put in a more intense light, and are given a distinct direction and purpose, which is emphasized again and again: “let all your life and your actions be directed to gaining a blessed departure and to arriving at the place of immortality and everlasting happiness.”⁹¹⁷

The Good Death

Suso’s *imago mortis* is instrumental not only as a deterrent and a reminder of awaiting punishment for remaining guilt. More positively, this *imago* points away from itself toward the goal of eternal life, and thus it also serves to encourage a desire for salvation. The ideal of death preparation as ascetic detachment from outer disturbances is formulated as to live with a “withdrawn heart” and with a *longing for death* and for the final life with Christ.⁹¹⁸ The dying man says to the Disciple:

But if you are among the few in wanting to be saved from this danger of unprepared death, listen to my advice, and often keep before your eyes this my sorrowful image which you are looking at; constantly call it to mind (...) *you will look forward to death* [emphasis added], fearful to all living men, as the end of your toil and the beginning of eternal happiness (...) Only do this: ‘Remember how I was judged, for so too will you be. Yesterday for me, and for you today.’⁹¹⁹

⁹¹⁷ Watch 257; Hor. 540.9-11 *sic omnis vita et actio tua ad hoc dirigatur, ut obitum beatum obtineas, et pervenias ad locum immortalitatis ac felicitates aeternae.*

⁹¹⁸ Watch 252; Hor. 535-7-9 *in tanta abstractione et cordis devotione existant, ut prae desiderio vitae aeternae mori cupiant ‘et cum Christo esse’ totis visceris concupiscant.* Cf. Phil 1.23. This formulation calls to mind the mystical idea of *gelaztheit*; yet, typical for the *Horologium*, the thought is not elaborated further in that direction, but emphasizes eternal salvation rather than mystical detachment.

⁹¹⁹ Watch 252; Hor. 535.17-25 *Tu vero, si cum paucis ab hoc periculo mortis indispositae salvari desideras, audi consilium meum, et hanc meam, quam vides, tristem personam frequenter oculis tuis obicias et ad memoriam iugiter reducas ... non solum mori non timeas, verum etiam mortem cunctis viventibus terribilem tamquam laboris terminum et aeternae felicitatis initium expectabis et excipies cum desiderio cordis tui. Hoc tantum facias, ut me cotidie profunde recogites; verba mea diligenter advertas, et ea in corde tuo conscribas. Ex visis in me doloribus et angustiis considera et pensa ea, quae tibi in proximo superventura sunt. ‘Memento iudicii mei; sic enim erit et tuum. Mihi heri, tibi hodie.’ Respice in me, et memento noctis huius quo advixeris.*

From the point of view of an ascetic, in line with the ethos of contempt of the world, death is welcomed as the end of toil and the liberation of the soul from the body. Longing for death, and thus heaven, is commonplace in the Dominican Sister-Books, where we can read about nuns who are laughing or singing on their deathbeds.⁹²⁰ Mechthild von Magdeburg expresses the same ideal: “Whenever I think of death, my soul looks forward to her leaving with such intensity that my body floats in great superhuman delight (...) and my senses recognize ineffable wonders in the departure of the soul.”⁹²¹ Many mystics and ascetics share this ideal. In Suso’s version, as the extract shows, this is held to be the exception more than the rule. His teaching about death is, however, not only lamentation over the loss of good piety. We do occasionally come upon passages that suggest what a good death is like. In light of what we have seen a good death must obviously mean a *prepared death*. Suso is not saying that a prepared death will necessarily be easy and without suffering. However, it will be a “happy death,” in the sense of a joyful departure into salvation. We saw above that Purgatory plays a major role in this dialogue, and that, from the viewpoint of the dying man, Purgatory is ‘infernal.’ Interestingly, a quite different concept of afterlife purgation is expressed earlier in the same chapter. This version of Purgatory is mentioned very briefly, but we can easily see the differences:

Happy the man whom this hour finds well prepared, for he will depart in happiness, however great the bitterness of death which he may suffer. “Whatever the death that may seize him, he will be at rest” [Wis 4.7] He will be purged and prepared for the vision of God’s glory, he will be guarded by the holy angels and conducted by the citizens of heaven, and he will be received by the celestial court. The passing of his spirit will be his happy entrance into his eternal native land.⁹²²

⁹²⁰ See Gehring (1957), pp. 192-214, here esp. pp. 210. See also Lewis (1996), pp. 166-70.

⁹²¹ *Flowing Light of the Godhead*, Book VI, 26, p. 252.

⁹²² *Watch* 253; *Hor.* 535.31-536.5 *Felix, quem bene paratum haec horam invenerit, quia feliciter migrabit, si etiam amaritudine mortis immensa afflictus fuerit. Quacumque enim ‘morte preaeoccupatus fuerit, en refrigerio erit.’ Purgabitur et ad visionem gloriae Dei disponetur, a sanctis angelis custodietur, a supernis civibus deducetur, et a caelesti curia suscipietur. Exitus sui spiritus erit aeternae patriae felix intritus.*

The two nearly opposite concepts of purgation found in this text demonstrate, again, that afterlife thought was composites of various ideas and could be very flexible.⁹²³ This passage does not mention torment, bitterness (*acerbitas*), or fire—which is usually the main ingredient in Purgatory. Unlike the nearly endless purgatorial suffering suggested in other parts of the chapter, this light kind of purgation seems to be very swift. It suggests merely a passing stage on the journey to heaven, a short preparation for the vision of God’s glory. This is the purgation of the well-prepared. It was not uncommon to think that good Christians could hope for a more or less direct admittance into heaven without the intermediary stay in purgatory.⁹²⁴

When the Hour Comes. Rudiments of an *Ars moriendi*

Suso’s chapter on death has as its primary purpose to frighten its readers into improvement and a life of intensified devotion. Besides its many deterrent aspects, it also has parts that reveal a more hopeful message. This is seen especially in the final part of the text, where we find what I shall call rudiments of an *Ars moriendi* ‘proper.’ That is to say we find a piece of instruction that is concerned with the actual deathbed situation rather than improvement and preparation through life.

After the unprepared man dies (and departs for Purgatory), Eternal Wisdom reappears and becomes the Disciple’s main dialogue partner once again. The topic of death and preparation is discussed a little further. Suso reaffirms his general teaching on death preparation in life, and also expresses what for him is the essence of good deathbed conduct:

⁹²³ The ‘light’ version of Purgatory is a more traditional one, whereas the ‘infernalized’ Purgatory is a characteristic of late medieval thought. In chapter seven Suso also mentions “places of cleansing,” which might well be a remnant of the early medieval idea of “receptacles” for souls. See Le Goff, as in n. above.

⁹²⁴ Burger (2001), p. 29: “Wer während seiner Erdenzeit in seinem Lebenswandel untadelig gewesen und in Frieden mit Gott und seine Kirche gestorben ist, der darf sogar darauf hoffen, dass er beim Partikulargericht nach seinem Tode unmittelbar in den Himmel aufgenommen wird.”

My son, remember these things at all times, while you are still young and healthy and strong, and can still amend your life. But when in fact you come to that hour, and can help yourself in no other way, nothing will remain except to commit yourself to the mercy of God alone, and to put my Passion between you and my judgment, lest, filled with more fear than need be of my justice, you lose your hope⁹²⁵

Unlike the situation of the unprepared man, which is one of disability or paralysis in terms of deathbed conduct, this passage outlines the necessary pattern of behavior, according to Suso. We see the unprepared man's problem reflected again here in the final sentence; he exemplifies the exact opposite, namely a person who was "filled with more fear than need be" of God's justice. "...remember these things at all times," Eternal Wisdom says, meaning the torment of Purgatory that must be kept alive in the imagination in life.⁹²⁶ This does not apply to deathbed situation, however. The dreadful prospect of afterlife judgment and punishment must be feared, but not too much! This passage explains in a simple way how the good death, like the good life, should be conditioned by a fear of God that is *balanced*, by love, hope, and longing for salvation.

We have seen previously that Suso's unprepared man was troubled by what we called a 'penitential disability.' An overwhelming fear made the issue of deathbed repentance problematic, it was said, as it was impossible to say whether repentance in such a situation was sincere or not, that is, motivated only by fear of punishment. Instead of offering a merciful solution, Suso, we saw, insists on a position much closer to that of Augustine: penitence must be done in good health. In line with such a position, asceticism or other works of satisfaction counted as a 'proof' of sincere, inner motivation, since pious endeavor in the midst of life was accompanied by the possibility of failure and neglect. In this important passage at

⁹²⁵ Watch 256; Hor. 539.4-10 *Haec fili mi, dum adhuc iuvenis es et sanus ac robustus, et emendare vitam tuam poteris, omni tempore memorare. Sed cum in veritate ad hanc horam perveneris, et iuvare te aliter non potes, nihil restat, nisi ut te misericordiae Dei solius committas, et passionem meam inter te et iudicium meum interponas, ne iustitiam meam ultra quam necesse est pertimescens excidas in spe tua.*

⁹²⁶ Watch 256; Hor 539.2-3 Discipulus:*Sed nunc paterne admonitus, oculos aperio, et [purgatorium] vehementer pertimesce.* See also 538.28-29.

the end of the dialogue, we find the same position repeated in connection with ‘actual’ death.

We see again that Suso is not primarily concerned with final penitence as part of deathbed conduct. The passage sets up a distinction between the preparations that can be done to “help yourself” in life, and that which can be done when the hour truly comes.⁹²⁷ In the final moment nothing remains (*nihil restat*) than to commit fully to the mercy of God. There is, then, a ‘merciful position’ after all, but not in the sense of a deathbed repentance that *sufficit ad salutem*, as suggested by the Disciple earlier in the chapter. The mercy of God applies where human efforts of preparation end, and it is available only in the passion of Christ. The dying is to evoke the passion and ‘interpose’ it between oneself and the judgment of God, that is, in-between sin and retribution. This is something that we have seen also in our study of Suso’s *tribulatio* teaching; tribulations are *interposed* between oneself and God’s strict judgment. This is possible, we saw in that part, as tribulations are nothing more or less than emulations of the passion itself. To be sure, Suso does not speak of tribulation in this sense at all in connection with death preparation. This detail is important, because this connection between death and the ‘practice’ of dying with Christ in tribulations, which is suggested in the *Bdew* version, is one of the reason why Haas and others have spoken of Suso’s teaching on death as a mystical teaching.⁹²⁸ Nonetheless, the logic of *interponere*, of immersion in the passion as a way of mitigating one’s personal judgment, is the structuring principle of both tribulations as a way of life and commitment to the passion in the moment of death.

Thus, *mutatis mutandis*, only the expiatory work of Christ can be relied upon in the final moment. This is not an exceptional position on deathbed conduct, but it is interesting to notice this effort of concentration and simplification of pious practice intended for a decisive moment. With this, we recall Suso’s passion-oriented theology of piety, which has been considered on several occasions. Good death presupposes a good life; and the works of preparation, which are

⁹²⁷ *Watch* 256; *Hor.* 539.5-8.

⁹²⁸ See below, pp. 243-44, for further discussion of this topic.

essentially basic elements of pious life in general, brings the devotee to a happy ending, but, decisively: this is not all that is necessary. "...when in fact you come to that hour, and can help your-self in no other way" formulates something that we have also seen before: when all comes to all, human works are insufficient and does not bring about a state of justification.⁹²⁹ That is to say, death preparation is necessary, but it can never be *sufficient*.

Even though this part of the chapter is rudimentary, and only a very short passage, and the main chapter is about the deterrent death, there is still good reason to take seriously what Suso here offers as an actual approach to the deathbed situation. There is another text within Suso's corpus that demonstrates a very similar position: his *Little Book of Letters*, the *Briefbüchlein*, is the collection of example letters based on his correspondence with Elsbeth Stigel and other "spiritual children." Among these letters, we find one that is addressed to a dying nun who is "behaving badly" on her deathbed. Presumably, this means that she is overwhelmed by fear and that this makes it difficult to die a good death.⁹³⁰ The central passage of this letter is worth considering:

If ever in all your days you have committed sins—as few people have not—you should not because of this be too greatly frightened at the hour of death. When you have received the last sacraments as best you can, if this is possible, then do this: Take the crucifix and, holding it before your eyes, look at it and press it to your hear. Incline yourself to the bleeding wounds of God's infinite mercy and ask him in his divine power to wash away all your wrongdoings with his bleeding wounds, both to his own glory and because of your need.⁹³¹

In this letter, as in Suso's dialogue on death, penitence in an institutionalized sense plays only a minor role. In stead we find the mentioned "gesture of humili-

⁹²⁹ See Chapter One in this study.

⁹³⁰ *Bfb* VI, 378.19-381.3

⁹³¹ *Exemplar*. 349-51; *Bfb* 379.13-23 *Hast du bi dinen tagen ie gebrestklich gelebt, als wenig menschen dar ane ist, dar ab solt du nit ze vast erschrecken an der stunde dines todes. So du dinu kristanlichu reht hast, ob du mach, ordentlich enpfangen, so tû ein sund nim daz cruzifixus für dinu ogen und sich ez an und truk es an din herz, und neig dich in die blütgiessenden wunden siner grundlosen erbarmherzekeit un bit in, daz er mit den blünassen wunden ab wesch in siner goetlichen kraft alle din missetat nach sinem lobe und diner noturft, und bis den sicher uf mich: nach kristanlichem globen, der mit nütu triegen kan, maht du das vesteklich in dir han, daz du den vor allem mitel genzlich wirst gelütert und froelich maht sterben.*

ty,” and also here a total reliance on the work of Christ. We see a tendency of mental immersion in the wounds, in the sensual-mystical style that is not seen similarly in the *Horologium*, which points to a more distanced type of gesture, and which distinguishes between the human, the passion Christ, and the judge, and emphasizes that Christ’s work intervenes between these two extreme poles. Also, in the letter, we find an emphasis on the blood as washing away sins, and a wound mysticism of immersion (*neigung*), whereas the *Horologium* passage emphasizes that the passion is to be evoked, as an outside force and put between one’s sins and God’s judgment.

The most important difference, in my view, is the assertion given toward the end of the passage, *bis denn sicher uf mich*. We can also note that this passage is introduced as how to die in absolute certainty. The *Bfb* letter suggests that direct admittance into heaven when it claims that this last moment passion immersion makes one “completely purified.” This element of certainty is not stressed in the *Horologium*, which instead suggests an ideal of balance of emotions, of fear and *hope*. “...put my Passion between you and my judgment, lest, filled with more fear than need be of my justice, you lose your hope.” To lose hope was seen as dangerous, and this sentence brings association to the despair of the unprepared man. This is what the unprepared man represents; utter uncertainty and despair, which gives way to the hellish forces. This allows us to make an observation about the teaching on death in the *Horologium*: the opposite of uncertain, unprepared death of the dying man is, namely, not to die in certainty, as expressed in the *Briefbuchlein*. Rather, the good death is, emphatically, to die in *hope*.

We can assume that this difference between the *Horologium* and the *Briefbuchlein* in formulations on deathbed certainty have to do with the fact that the works addressed different audiences. Whereas the *Briefbuchlein* deals with specific issues related to a monastic setting for women, and also demonstrates a strong mystical orientation and in a sense speaks to a religious elite of advanced spirits, the *Horologium* with its widely conveyed message cannot assert a similar message; it needs to maintain an uncertainty at least in terms of direct admittance. Recall what was said earlier about Purgatory, namely that the best Christians

could expect admittance into Heaven, whereas most people had to expect some purgation.⁹³² In the rudimentary *Ars moriendi* in the *Horologium*, Suso takes no chances, as he speaks to a large audience.

These differences are important enough, as they help us to see the profile of the *Horologium* by way of comparison with other works of a more specific address. The differences do not, however, overshadow the similarities between these two *Ars moriendi* ‘fragments.’ Although expressed somewhat differently in the two texts, the main idea is that a total reliance on the work of Christ is what makes a good death. Both texts demonstrate an intensified notion of human sinfulness, and the view that preparations, although necessary, will never be sufficient. The letter to the dying nun explicates what the *Horologium* text often implies, namely that humans are in *need* of this force of expiation, and that it is necessary in this last moment to evoke it. Only the mercy of God is to be relied upon (*misericordiae Dei solius committas*), the *Horologium* states, and this happens only by evoking the passion of Christ.

Berndt Hamm has pointed to this element as a characteristic of one type of *Ars moriendi* literature.⁹³³ Hamm formulates this line as a one of reliance on an *extra nos* power in the moment of death. That is to say, a power of expiation that lies outside humans and their actions. This is different from an *Ars moriendi* that instructs deathbed repentance, which entails an attritionist thinking,⁹³⁴ or one which outlines the good death in terms of *imitatio Christi*, of internal identification with the dying Christ. *Imitatio* is an element in Suso’s ideal of sustaining adversities in life. In his teaching on death, however, it is a distinct *extra* perspective that dominates.

Suso’s vision of unprepared death as a whole demonstrates an intense concentration toward an *imago mortis* that is clear-cut, simplified and memorable. His version of a good death at the end of the chapter exemplifies the *Horologium* as a work that concentrates on the necessary, when necessary. With the exhortation to think about death and the afterlife and with the final, rudimentary *Ars*

⁹³² Cf. Burger (2001), p. 29.

⁹³³ Hamm (2007a), pp. 308-9.

⁹³⁴ See above, pp. 210-13.

moriendi, we see the width of Suso's approach: Within one and the same text, he holds together the frightening prospect of the afterlife and the notion of the judge on the one hand, and the promise of grace by way of reliance on the passion on the other. We find in Suso's 'death book' an *integrative* theology of piety with a distinct direction, which is summoned in the dying man's advice to the Disciple and to the reader: "Shun all the poisons and hindrances to your eternal salvation."

Mysticism, Death and the Profile of the *Horologium sapientiae*

In this part, we shall first take a step back and consider how this teaching on death and death preparation is presented in the *Horologium*. A comparison with the *Bdew* will point us to an interesting difference between the Latin work and its German precursor. This comparison will let us make interesting observations about the profile of the *Horologium*.

We recall that Suso's chapter on death immediately follows his vision of a school where philosophers are quarreling over a Silver Ball. Here Suso expresses his school criticism and his idea of a spiritual philosophy (*philosophia spiritualis*), a 'school of Christ' (II, 1).⁹³⁵ This idea of a "highest philosophy" is distinguished from the lower and imperfect ways of studying and teaching Sacred Scripture for the sake of promotion and truth-seeking by way of academic exercises. The highest philosophy is a school of contemplation and ecstasy, an ultimate balance of divine love and learning. The disciple is struck with the "greatest wonder" by this vision. As the death chapter begins, we find him in an outburst of inspiration; having been told about this 'school of Christ,' he is keen to know more and to reach the depths of divine wisdom. He refers to an Aristotelian idea of a natural

⁹³⁵ See Chapter One. On Suso's idea of Philosophy in Hor. II, 1 and 3, see also Blumrich (1994), pp. 620-32.

desire in men to know all things,⁹³⁶ and he asks to be instructed “in these great things,” “the most subtle and profound matters.”⁹³⁷

In response, Wisdom provides a quote from Paul’s letter to the Romans (11.20) “My son, ‘do not wish to know exalted things, but fear.’ Listen to me and I shall teach you what is useful ... my teaching will itself be your life.” These words serve as an introduction not only to the death chapter, but to the next four chapters in this part of the work (II 2-5), which are presented as a type of compendium of key elements of true devotion: To know how to die, to know how to live a sound spiritual life of ascetic detachment, to know how to receive the Lord sacramentally, and, finally, to know how to praise God with a pure heart. This structure of four ‘practical’ chapters is also found in the *Bdew*. However, the way the dialogue on death and the other ‘practical’ chapters are introduced in the two versions reveals an interesting difference. Let us look at how the same chapter is introduced in the *Bdew*:

In *Bdew*, the chapter on death is introduced by these words of the Servant:

Lord, what is most important for a servant of eternal Wisdom, if he wishes to be yours alone? Lord, I would like to hear about the union of the naked intellect with the holy Trinity where, in the true reflection of the birth of the Word and also the birth of their Spirit, the intellect is taken from itself and is stripped of all obstacles⁹³⁸

In the corresponding passage in the *Horologium*, the words of the Disciple are as follows:

Since all men by nature seem to wish to know, O highest and Eternal Wisdom, and since you, the universal leader and Author of nature, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” [Col 2.3.] to whom our words are addressed, are “the Maker of all things,” possessing all knowledge, “overseeing all things,” [Wis 7.21, 23] I beg this of you with my heart’s avid desire, that you will

⁹³⁶ *Watch* 242, *Hor* 526.12 *Cum omnes homines natura scire desiderent...* This idea, originally from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, occurs several times in the works of Thomas Aquinas, See Künzle (1977), p. 526 n.

⁹³⁷ *Watch* 242, *Hor*. 526.15-22.

⁹³⁸ *Exemplar* 268; *Bdew* 279.3 *Herr, waz gehôret einem diener der Ewigen Wisheit aller eigenlichest zû, der dir allein begert ze sinne? Herr, ich horti gern von der vereinunge der blozen vernuft mit der heiligen drivalteikeit, da si in dem waren widerglanze der ingeburt des wortes und widergeburt ir selbes geistes ir selber wirt benomen und vol allem mittel geblozet.*

open to me all the treasure of your wisdom, “and the knowledge of holy things,” [Prv 9.10] and that you will instruct me in these great things, and that you will make these most subtle and profound matters which must now be discussed the center of your teaching.⁹³⁹

The differences are easily seen. As usual, the *Horologium* text is longer and contains several biblical quotes compared to the *Bdew*. More importantly, however, we see also that the wording has changed significantly: in the *Horologium* version the Disciple speaks in general terms of the treasures of Wisdom, of profound knowledge which man naturally desires (in accordance with Aristotle and Aquinas). In *Bdew*, on the other hand, the Servant uses a language of speculative mysticism, of the union of *der blozen vernuft*, of “pure reason” with the Holy Trinity and of the intellect as “stripped of all obstacles.” Without going into specific meanings of these statements,⁹⁴⁰ we can easily observe that this language has a strong speculative ring to it, in the fashion of eckhartian mysticism, where similar statements articulate the immediacy of the advancing soul with God’s innermost reality.

Now, importantly, none of these requests, either that given by the Servant in the *Bdew* or the Disciple in the *Horologium* are met: Wisdom’s response, in both versions, is to point to the practical teaching on death and death preparation (and the following chapters). The two books have essentially the same objective: to point to what is fruitful to salvation, in this case death preparation, and thus also to steer the reader away from the disturbances on this path.

However, the differences in formulation that were just observed are significant to our study of the *Horologium*. They point to differences in what we may call the ‘reference system’ of the intended audience. Suso, in *Bdew*, addresses an audience from which a familiarity with a speculative mystical language is ex-

⁹³⁹ Watch 242; Hor. 526.15-22 *Cum omnes homines natura scire desiderent, o summa et aeterna sapientia, et in te universali principe et naturae auctore, ad quem nobis sermo, ‘omnes thesauri sapientiae et scientiae sint absconditi,’ sisque ‘omnium artifex,’ omnem habens scientiam, ‘omnia prospiciens;’ hinc avido cordis desiderio peto, ut thesaurum sapientiae tuae mihi aperias, ‘scientiamque sanctorum’ et de rebus magnis instruas, et ut materias quoque subtilissimas ac profundissimas nunc pertractandas in medium proponas.*

⁹⁴⁰ For a nuanced view on the idea of mystical union in Suso compared to Meister Eckhart, see the introduction above, p. 19, n. 47 with references.

pected, whereas the *Horologium* speaks generally about an ideal practical theology in a way that stands in direct continuity with his portrayal of the schools in the preceding chapter. Whereas the *Bdew* is certainly a work that is “of a less speculative nature” than the *Bdw* or parts of the *Vita*, its introduction to the death chapter shows that a mystical-speculative jargon could nonetheless serve as a backdrop. If the *Bdew* is less speculative compared to other works by Suso, the *Horologium* is not speculative at all. The *Horologium* does not present its teaching on death against a backdrop of mysticism, but more generally as a “most useful teaching” of salvation oriented practice put in contrast to fruitless academic life and *vana curiositas*. The desire for knowledge that the Disciple here expresses, is a symptom of the present state of affairs. The teaching on death is presented as a concentration on a necessary and salutary teaching that everyone who wishes to die in peace with God should apply to their life.

This detail is important as it suggests the ambition Suso seems to have had with his Latin work: to reach a relatively broad audience with a pragmatic teaching about spiritual life, a teaching that is distanced from speculative mysticism.

This point is strengthened if we consider another small but interesting difference between the German and Latin version of Suso’s ‘Death book.’ In *Bdew*, the announcement that the servant is to learn about death gives rise to a brief discussion about *spiritual* and *physical* death: “Lord, do you mean a spiritual dying, which your lonely death demonstrated so lovingly, or physical death?” Eternal Wisdom replies: “I mean both of them.”⁹⁴¹

When the Servant of the *Bdew* is told that he is to learn about death, he immediately assumes that he is to learn about a spiritual death-with-Christ, and thus advance as a mystic. Unlike the *Horologium*, the *Bdew* suggests a metaphorical use of ‘death’ that can be seen in mystical literature from this period. Even if this idea of spiritual death is not pursued to any real extent in the actual chapter that follows, which in essence resembles the one in the *Horologium*, it is interesting to

⁹⁴¹ Exemplar 268-9; *Bdew* 279.22-26 Herre, weder meinest du aber ein geistliches sterben, daz mich din ellender töt so minneklich hat bewiset, oder ein lipliches sterben? Entwürt der Ewigen Wisheit: Ich meine sū beidū.

note that this idea of a spiritual death—*mors mystica*⁹⁴²—is suggested only in the *Bdew*, and not in the *Horologium*. The intended audience of the *Bdew*, unlike that of the *Horologium*, were expected to be familiar with a mystical language where death served as a key metaphor for the high mystical experience, or as the preparatory states of total detachment. The tendency to describe mystical states of the soul in terms of death or dying is seen time and again in the works of Tauler and Eckhart.⁹⁴³ It is also seen in the Dominican Sister-Books.⁹⁴⁴ The treatment of death in the *Bdew* shows traces of this way of thinking. Alois Haas, in an extensive article on the theme *mors mystica*, “Mystical Death,” saw the death chapter in the *Bdew* as one important source in a line of mystical works that are seen to expound on this theme.⁹⁴⁵ Haas saw the metaphorical use of death in the *Bdew* as expression of an inner relation in the work and in correspondence with the idea of “dying with Christ” as seen in earlier parts of the book. Peter Ulrich concluded that the death chapter in Suso’s *Bdew* was about death preparation on a higher level, as part of a mystical teaching on *unio* in an eckhartian tradition.⁹⁴⁶

The absence of any such mentioning of spiritual death in the *Horologium* means that the tradition of *mors mystica* cannot serve as a framework for our interpretation of the text. If we consider the chapter on death in the *Horologium* separately, there is nothing in it that can be labeled mysticism in any proper sense

⁹⁴² “...das Ersterben der Seele und des Geistes mit allen ihrer Kräften in die Liebesvereinigung mit Gott,” See art. “Mors mystica,” in Dinzelsbacher (ed.) (1989), pp. 364-65.

⁹⁴³ Tauler expresses the thought in his sermon 20: *Liebes kint, du müst sterben, sol der minnecliche Got din leben one mittel werden und din wesen werden*. Ed Vetter, 84.8-9. See Eckhart’s *Sermon 8: Man soll bis auf den Grund tot sein, so dass uns weder Lieb noch Leid berührte*. An ‘inner death’ is held as a precondition for mystical vision: *Wie soll der Mensch sein, der Gott schauen soll? Er soll tot sein*.

⁹⁴⁴ See, for instance, the introductory convent chronicle in the *Buchlein der genaden uberlast*, the Engelthal Sister-Book by Christine Ebner: *Als sie ze tische sazzen, so saz die meisterin ze oberst. Als sie denne ein wenig gaz, so las sie in teusche ze tisch: so waz selten daz mal, ez wurde ie ir etlichow sinnelos, und lagen als die toten, wanne sie waren werlich in got tot. Diesew genad heten sie ze werk und an irm gebet und swa sie daz gotes genad suzzelich herten, an einw die wart niht entzukt...*, ed. K. Schröder (1871), p. 2.19-25. Another example from this group of sources is the vita of Sophia von Klingnau in the Sister-Book of Töss, where a powerful experience of the soul abandoning her body and God enters into the soul and unites with it, is clearly described as a death of the soul. See the Sister-Book of Töss, ed Vetter (1907), pp. 57.14-58.6.

⁹⁴⁵ Haas (1976).

⁹⁴⁶ Ulrich (1994), p. 172: “Die Unterweisung in die rechte Todesauffassung [ist] zugleich Vorbereitung und *dispositio* für die *unio*.”

of this term. Rather, it is a text that takes actual, personal death very seriously, and that shows an extreme focus on the moment of death, and, by way of the opposite—an unprepared death—it encourages readers to prepare throughout life for a good death, which is, in itself, a decisive pious occasion on the way to salvation.

One could argue that these are small differences and that the lack of mystical elements such as those seen in the *Bdew* simply reflect the fact that distinctly vernacular concepts did not easily translate to Latin. However, it must be noted that Suso does not even try to adopt the wordings of a more mystical flavor from the *Bdew* to the *Horologium*, even where he certainly could. The best example is a peculiar formulation seen only in the *Bdew*, “It is detachment above all detachment to be detached in one’s detachment,” which demonstrates the fondness for paradox that is typical of what we may call eckhartian thought.⁹⁴⁷

The differences between the *Bdew* and the *Horologium* on this matter are interesting, but they should not overshadow the fact that these works are very similar. In comparison with the literary context that Suso is usually associated with—the teaching of Eckhart and Tauler, or the writings from the female Dominican monasteries of southern Germany—this chapter in Book two of the *Horologium* presents an innovative teaching about death: I offer to view this as a leap away from mystical theology: seen against background of Rhineland mysticism, the *Bdew*, and the *Horologium* even more, shows a new direction: from ‘death’ as a way of speaking metaphorically about the advancing soul’s detachment from the world and immediacy with God, to a teaching about *actual* death that is personal and salvation-oriented. Conversely, we find no other outstanding examples of texts on death preparation in the so-called ‘mystical literature.’ The comparison of the *Bdew* and the *Horologium* shows a process of refining a clear-cut teaching on death that, in the ‘final product,’ no longer finds room for death-as-metaphor at all. The *Horologium* shows an attempt to promote a mainstream theology of piety

⁹⁴⁷ *Exemplar* 234; *Bdew* 232.16-17 *Ein Gelaztheit ob aller gelaztheit ist gelazen sin in gelaztheit*. The formulation is found in chapter nine of the *Bdew*, which corresponds to chapter eight in Book I of the *Horologium*. The latter version emphasizes bridal mysticism and the *ludus amoris*, inspired by Ovid. See *Watch* 136-48, esp. 145-46; *Hor.* 436-48, esp. 445-6.

and inner life that accommodates ways of thinking and living for a wide audience compared to that of Rhineland mysticism.

A Vision of Heaven (*Horologium* I, 11)

We are concerned here with Suso's teaching on death specifically, but also his afterlife thought. The various elements of the "last things," we have seen, became acutely present in the vision of the dying man. The portrayal of unprepared death is an example of how the perceived threats of the afterlife are pressing on and 'intervening' in life, and much of Suso's practical theology—his teaching on *tribulatio*, on prayer and meditation, on Eucharist devotion, and ascetic death preparation—is about tackling these threatening prospects and of finding relief from 'eschatological pressure.' Relief is also found in the form of visions. The Vision of Hell, which was commented on in the beginning of this chapter, is immediately followed by a chapter entitled *De gaudiis supercaelestibus*, "Of the Joys of Highest Heaven."⁹⁴⁸ This drastic shift from one extreme 'pole' to the other is typical of the intense spiritual quest of the Disciple in the *Horologium*.

"Let us move on to happy themes," Eternal Wisdom says after the torment of hell has been thoroughly depicted. The vision of heaven is introduced by a call to join the number of the *electi*:

For truly in this world you are a stranger and a pilgrim, and therefore it is for you, sent as it were into exile, to hasten and to join that number so vast of beloved ones who are waiting for you with such great longing, so that they may sweetly receive you among them in their blessed embraces, and "may make you sit with them" (Eph 2.6) for all eternity."⁹⁴⁹

As we saw in the previous part, this Afterlife vision is also a composite of various sources and ideas of what Heaven is. There is Biblical imagery, traditional ideas

⁹⁴⁸ *Watch* 163-71; *Hor.* 460-68.

⁹⁴⁹ *Watch* 163; *Hor.* 460.16-19 *Nimirum in hoc mundo advena es et peregrinus, et ideo tamquam peregre constituto properandum tibi est ad carorum numerum tam copiosum, qui te magno cum desiderio exspectant, ut te dulciter recipientes beatis amplexibus secum 'consedere faciant' in aeternum.*

of a heavenly city inhabited by hierarchies of angels, drawn on the ideas of Pseudo Dionysius; there is a heavenly choir, multitudes of electi, virgins, and martyrs. Much attention is given to Mary, “the Queen of virgins ... in her matchless beauty.”⁹⁵⁰

Heaven is here presented as a glorious and sublime city with gold and gems, and where a sweet fragrance is felt.⁹⁵¹ A Scriptural basis of the idea of Heaven is seen in: “The streets paved with purest gold, like transparent glass” (Apoc 21.21) and various similar concrete expressions of greatness that are often seen in medieval conceptions of heaven.

The preceding chapter on Hell and also the vision of Purgatory in the death chapter consists, we saw earlier, of ‘glimpses’ into various places and forms of punishment. These places are chaotic and loud, but also *static*, in the sense that they emphasize a very long lasting state of torment. This vision of heaven is more dynamic. Heaven is made up of different spheres, and the text clearly suggests an *ascent* through various stages and hierarchies. From the first sphere, where vast numbers of happy *electi* are gathered, Eternal Wisdom leads the Disciple’s “inward eye” even further up:

... hasten with me, so that I may lead you to the place for which your soul is longing, and there you will see the deepest mysteries of the divine marvels. Look up to the eight sphere, more than a hundred thousand times greater than all the earth, yet there is a certain heaven higher still, which is called the empyrean; and it has its name for its extraordinary luminosity, uniform, immobile, perfectly luminous and immensely capacious. And this is that King’s hall, the heavenly court of blessed spirits... There the heavenly seats and the luminous thrones are placed, from which that wretched company of malign spirits will flee away, to be replaced by the assembly of the elect.⁹⁵²

⁹⁵⁰ *Watch* 166-67; *Hor.* 463.4-464.9.

⁹⁵¹ See the St. Patric legend in Jacobus de Voragine’s *Legenda Aurea*, “The Golden Legend,” vol I, pp. 193-5.

⁹⁵² *Watch* 164; *Hor.* 461.19-462.2 *Iam nunc elevare, 'elevare, consurge' [Is 51.17] et concito gradu tecum perge, et ducam te ad locum, quem desiderat anima tua, ibique videbis divinorum mirabilium profundissima mysteria. Ecce supra octavam sphaeram, quae longe plus quam centies milies maior est omni terra, est quoddam adhuc altius caelum, quod vocatur empyreum, ob eximiam sui luminositatem sic dictum, uniforme, immobile, luminositas perfectae, et capacitatis immensae; et haec est illa regalis aula, curia caelestis spirituum beatorum ... Ibi sedes caelestes ac throni luminosi positi sunt, de quibus ille infelix numerus spirituum malignorum corruens, electorum numero reparandus erit.*

A hierarchical concept of heaven is clearly seen. The part of the vision about the Kings hall is inspired by Thomas Aquinas' *Commentary on the Sentences*.⁹⁵³ The "empyrean" is a place of enjoyment, inebriation, and singing. However, it is also a place of *decision*, where order is established. Eternal wisdom speaks of the apostles and "my friends" are seated before all the others ... given the power to judge,⁹⁵⁴ and there is a separate section on the Queen of virgins "... defending the wretched and reconciling the guilty."⁹⁵⁵ We see that the idea of God's judging authority is also present here, but it is far from the type of confronting angry judgment that is seen on a number of occasions.

A passage that describes the host of angels also attests to this fundamentally hierarchic notion of Heaven: "after this, turning the eyes of your understanding to the nature of angels, see how those supreme ones of the order of the seraphim and the spirits of their choir, burning with a divine love, are drawn up towards God."⁹⁵⁶ Suso here renders the teaching on the heavenly hierarchies by pseudo-Dionysius, a teaching that is also found in the *Summa theologiae*.⁹⁵⁷

We notice that there is a clear correspondence between this vision and the *tribulatio* chapters that we have discussed previously. The highest point of heaven means, it is stressed, the farthest distance from the worldly existence of reproaches and adversity. The degree of adversity and the height and purity of beatification is in a corresponding relationship.⁹⁵⁸ The Disciple and the reader are exhorted to live like a "Valiant knight" and "in all things act forcefully," and not to be frightened by adversities that may come.⁹⁵⁹ Like the blessed ones in heaven so happily overcame their adversities in life, so must also a friend of God on earth sustain

⁹⁵³ Künzle (1977), p. 461.

⁹⁵⁴ See Mt 19.28.

⁹⁵⁵ *Watch* 166; *Hor.* 463-4-13.

⁹⁵⁶ *Watch* 166-67; *Hor.* 463.15-464.9.

⁹⁵⁷ *Sth* I, q. 108, a. 5, ad 4, 5, 6; see Colledge (1994), p. 167 n. 27.

⁹⁵⁸ *Watch* 164 "... the more in this world you will have sustained some great labor for the Savior's name, so much greater a reward you will receive in adversity." *Hor.* 461.1-2 *Et revera, quanto hic pro nomine salvatoris maiorem sustinueris laborem, tanto in aeternitate potius recipies mercedem.*

⁹⁵⁹ *Watch* 168; 171; *Hor.* 466.15-18; 468.25-27.

tribulations and act valiantly.⁹⁶⁰ The motive of the soldier and knight is used extensively:

O, with what glory will he be raised up, with what exceptional honor will this soldier be distinguished, who for the triumph of his patience and the showing of his constancy will be gloriously commended by so great a king before his beloved Father at the heavenly throne, will be surrounded by the cohorts of angels!⁹⁶¹

Addressing the *electi* in heaven, Eternal Wisdom says "the hour has now come when you will no longer flee (...) as the humble and rejected. For now you are crowned with such glory and honor."⁹⁶² The victorious knight, who has sustained adversities in life, will be raised up and he will be surrounded by a "cohort of angels". It is these ideas that are invoked in the chapters about *tribulatio*, and it outlines a peaceful and delightful heavenly society in an absolute contrast to the persecutions, scorn and hostility that a devotee might experience on earth.⁹⁶³

This part of the vision demonstrates an idea of heaven as distinctly *social*. "O how happy the city where there is always such festivity... .. blessed and happy are those bidden to such a banquet and elected by God to merit that they join in such a company."⁹⁶⁴ There heavenly court is dense with angels, electi, apostles, friends, martyrs and virgins. Here Suso is in touch with a long tradition, going back to Augustine, of describing heaven as a social place.⁹⁶⁵

⁹⁶⁰ See Chapter One. See also *Watch* 318; *Hor.* 539.29-31 *Et quicumque in his tribulationibus viriliter 'usque in finem perseveraverit' in hoc mundo eius in obsequio, hic tandem feliciter eidem copulabitur sine fine in regno suo glorioso.*

⁹⁶¹ *Watch* 164; *Hor.* 461.2-6 *O quanta Gloria sublimabitur, et quam eximio honore extolletur hic miles, qui a rege tanto de patientiae triumpho constantiaeque praeconio coram Patre dilecto in caelesti solio, angelorum vallatus collegio, commendabitur gloriose.*

⁹⁶² *Watch* 170; *Hor.* 467.6 *ecce venit hora non plus fugitatis ... tamquam humiles et abiecti.*

⁹⁶³ See also *Hor.* 468.25-27.

⁹⁶⁴ *Watch* 167; *Hor.* 464.17-20 *O quam felix civitas, ubi iugis sollemnitas; et quam iucunda curia, quae curae prorsus nescia. Beati proinde et felices, qui ad tantum convivium invitati sunt, qui tali consortii electione divina interesse meruerunt.*

⁹⁶⁵ Andrew Louth has observed that in *De civitate Dei*, "On the City of God," XIX, 5, Augustine underlines that the life of the saints is a social one (*esset socialis vita sanctorum*). Cited in Louth (1981/2007), p. 32.

Unio mystica

Suso's heavenly vision consists, roughly, of two parts. The first part is a composite of different conceptions of bliss, describing the city paved with gold and a heavenly court within a vast sphere. Emphasis is put on the heavenly community and social dimension of salvation. After this portrayal, the Disciple is told that there is yet another dimension. This part of the chapter demonstrates a different and distinctly *personal* idea of salvation. In this part we find expressed a mystical concept of final union with God. Concerning this highest point of all the heavenly spheres, the Disciple is told the following: "The faithful spouse who is to reign forever will be led home in happiness into this heavenly land... and she will at last be robed in a glorified body." Then we read further that: "She will have a golden crown, and a little crown on top of that." Like the portrayal of the Kings hall, this teaching on glorification is drawn from Aquinas' *Commentary on the Sentences*.⁹⁶⁶ The language also recalls the bridal mysticism of Bernard of Clairvaux as seen in his sermons on the *Song of Songs*, where he speaks of the bride who is taken into the master's chamber.⁹⁶⁷ The image of the two crowns, from Exodus (25.25) express the idea that within the hierarchy of the blessed there are clear distinctions, a thought which is also put to words earlier in the chapter using pseudo-Dionysius' teaching on the hierarchies of angels.⁹⁶⁸ The crowns are explained to the Disciple as the "accidental reward" and the "essential reward." The lower crown means the "accidental reward," it is said, which means basically the

⁹⁶⁶ Künzle (1977), p. 465. The place in Thomas' work is IV d. 49, q. 5 a. 1 c.

⁹⁶⁷ In the *Bdew* version of this passage the glorification and the two crowns is referred to as the *morgengabe*, the "bridal gift."

⁹⁶⁸ See Grosse (2005), p. 290 n.24. Cf. *Hor.* 464.7-8 *quanta meritum diversitate distincta*. *Watch* 166. This is one of a very few instances in the *Horologium* where Suso uses the teaching of pseudo-Dionysius. See also *Watch* 73; *Hor.* 381-382. In this case, the use is similar to that of Thomas Aquinas, cf. *Watch* 166, on how the "countless multitude" is "looking into that most divine mirror," see *Hor.* 462.20-463.1. As is well known the thought of pseudo-Dionysius, accessed via the translations of John Scotus Eriugena, was important source for late medieval mysticism; but the Dionysian ideas on the heavenly hierarchies also informed theologians far beyond a realm of what has been labeled German or Rhineland mysticism, and Suso in this chapter is close to the way Thomas Aquinas used pseudo-Dionysius. See Künle (1977), pp. 462-63. For the importance of pseudo-Dionysius in mysticism, see Ruh (1990), pp. 31-82.

reward for gained merit. Some, however, reach a higher stage of salvation. Concerning the top crown, that is the “essential reward,” we read further that it

...consists indeed in the perfect conjunction of the soul with God (*perfecta coniunctione animae cum Deo*), so far as the soul perfectly finds its enjoyment in him as in one who is perfectly seen and loved. For the endless desire of the soul will never be fully satisfied unless it be absolutely immersed in the depths of the godhead (*fuerit abyssus divinitatis absolute immersum*). And so in this perfect enjoyment of that supreme Trinity and most simple unity it will at last be made completely blessed.⁹⁶⁹

Suso shows a proximity to speculative mysticism in this passage. The highest imaginable ‘point’ in heaven is personal union of the soul with God. The soul is “made one spirit” with the “depths of the divine clarity,” the soul is “by grace ... made that which God is by nature.”⁹⁷⁰ This formulation, to become by grace that which God is by nature, derives, Künzle observes, from Wilhelm of Thierry, and it appears in sermons by both Meister Eckhart⁹⁷¹ and John Tauler.⁹⁷²

However, in comparison with Tauler and Eckhart, there is a difference that is worth noticing: It is significant that such formulations are only found here in Suso’s the vision of heaven. That is, they are part of an *eschatological* vision, whereas Eckhart and Tauler uses such ideas as expressed here in relation to the soul’s process of detachment more generally, and emphasize breakthrough and *unio* in life, that is to say, they express a genuine unitive mysticism.

⁹⁶⁹ Watch 168; Hor. 465.10-15 *Praemium vero essentiale consistit in perfecta coniunctione animae cum Deo, in quantum eo perfecte fruitur, ut viso et amato perfecte. Animae namque desiderium infinitum numquam satiatur ad plenum, nisi fuerit abyssus divinitatis absolute immersum. Sicque in illius summae trinitatis ac simplicissimae unitatis perfecta fruitione tandem complete beatificabitur.*

⁹⁷⁰ *unus cum eo spiritus efficitur, ita ut hoc, quod Deus est per naturam, ipsa fiet per gratiam.* In *Bdew*, it is said that the soul it is made into the same *being* (*wesen*) as God, whereas the *Horologium* reads *spiritus*, where it is swept along, and to which it is so united that it cannot want otherwise than what God wants. And this is the same being that God is: They become blessed by grace as he is blessed by nature.” *in daz tief abgrunde der wiselosen gotheit in die sū versenket, verswenmet und vereinet werdent, daz sū nüt anders mugen wellen, den daz got wil, und daz ist daz selb wesen, daz da got is, daz ist, daz sū selig sint von gnaden, al ser selig ist von natur.* *Bdew* 245.9-15. On Suso’s expressions of deification, see *Bdew* chapter 5.

⁹⁷¹ Künzle (1977), p 465. See Eckhart Predigt 1, *Werke I*, pp. 10-23.

⁹⁷² See, e.g., Sermon 27, ed. Vetter, p. 146.21-23. See also Hamm (2010a), p. 243.

The passage from Suso's vision of heaven outlines the idea of *perfecta coniunctione* with God, beatification, as a union with the Trinity. It has been observed by several scholars that Suso is careful not to assert a godhead *beyond* the Trinity, like Meister Eckhart tend to do. Suso equals the absolute immersion in the "depths of the godhead" with the "perfect enjoyment of the supreme trinity and most simple unity." A few sentences later, this is repeated as "clinging sweetly and inseparably, to the supreme Trinity." As Sven Grosse and others have shown,⁹⁷³ there is a tendency in all of Suso's writings to maintain the distinctiveness of the persons of the Trinity and thus not go beyond the Trinity and to propose a *unio* with the 'godhead' without distinction, an idea that can be seen in Eckhart and that was risky to propose.⁹⁷⁴

In terms of radical mysticism, Suso's *Buchlein der Wahrheit* lies much closer to the speculative thought of Eckhart than the *Bdew* and the *Horologium*.⁹⁷⁵ However, some notable differences can be seen also between the *Horologium* and its precursor. For instance, no mention of the Trinity is found in the corresponding passage in the *Bdew*.⁹⁷⁶ Now, this is not to say that the *Bdew* says something completely different, but it may suggest that in the *Horologium*, Suso is more careful to assert an orthodox mystical concept of *Unio* than is the case in the *Bdew*. In this passage on the highest union in the *Bdew*, Suso's language lies closer to the formulations often encountered in vernacular Rhineland mysticism: "The more the soul freely goes out of itself in detachment, the freer is its ascent; and the freer its ascent is, the farther it enters into the wild wasteland and deep abyss of the pathless Godhead into which it plummets, where it is swept along, and to which it is so united that it cannot want otherwise than what God wants."⁹⁷⁷

⁹⁷³ Grosse (2005); See also Büchner (2007), pp 42-75; McGinn (2005b).

⁹⁷⁴ Cf. Eckhart, *Predigt I, Werke I*, p. 20.29-35.

⁹⁷⁵ See Lerner (1972), p. 188.

⁹⁷⁶ The *Horologium* expands the passage, compared to the *Bdew*, with formulations that emphasize this Trinitarian aspect and also "summarizes" and joins the social and personal conception of heaven: "O, how happy the soul that will be made a companion of the angelic troops, that will be saturated with the nectar of Christ, and that will be joined, clinging sweetly and inseparably, to the supreme Trinity in its blessed embrace! O, untellable ending, and wonderful and utter sweetness of this coming into rest!"

⁹⁷⁷ *Exemplar* 243; *Bdew* 245.1-15, here 9-11: *ie abgescheidner lediger usgang ... ie neher ingang in die wilden wu(e)sti und in daz tief abgründe der wiselosen gotheit.*

The corresponding sentence in the *Horologium*, on the other hand, is based on Thomas Aquinas.⁹⁷⁸

In comparison with the *Bdew*, in itself a relatively moderate work in terms of mystical content, and in most cases is basically the same work as the *Horologium*, we can nonetheless observe some significant modifications that have been done to the Latin text. In comparison with the *Bdew*, the formulation of *unio* in the *Horologium* shows a careful distinction between what happens ‘here’ and ‘there’, that is to say, between what is possible in human life and what belongs to eternal life of beatitude. The type of union that is outlined in the heaven chapter is emphatically a *future* event. “And as much as now it more perfectly forsakes all temporal things, with so much the more freedom will it rise to the contemplation of spiritual things. And by as much as it surrenders itself to spiritual actions, by so much will it there be absorbed into the depths of the most divine clarity, and will there be made one spirit with it, so that the soul will by grace be made that which God is by nature.”⁹⁷⁹

In the *Horologium* version these key sentences carefully set up a juxtaposition using *nunc* and *illic*, “here” and “there,” *quanto* and *tanto*, “so much” (presently) and “... so much” (in the future, using the verb forms *efficietur* and *fiet*). In comparison, the *Bdew* formulates the corresponding sentence on *unio* in the present tense, and thus does not distinguish as clearly as the *Horologium* between what is possible here and now and what will happen there, in eternity.⁹⁸⁰ The same tendency was observed earlier in Suso’s Eucharist chapter, where Suso carefully asserted that the ‘high’ experiences that some people reach in this life are a *fore-*

⁹⁷⁸ The source is Thomas’ *On the Perfection of the Spiritual Life*, Ch. 7, see Künzle (1977), p. 465.

⁹⁷⁹ *Watch* 168; *Hor.* 465.15-20 *Et quanto nunc perfectius temporalia cuncta reliquerit, tanto liberior ad contemplationem spiritualium consurgit. Et quanto plus se actibus mancipaverit spiritualibus, tanto illic felicius absorbebitur in abyssum divinissimae claritatis, et unus cum eo spiritus efficietur, ita ut hoc, quod Deus est per naturam, ipsa fiet per gratiam.* College notes that the first part of this statement is in line with Aquinas’ *On the Perfection of Spiritual Life*. The second part, on the soul becoming *by grace* what God is *by nature* can often be encountered in mysticism. It is seen in Both Eckhart and Tauler. It derives, however, from Wilhelm of Thierry (*Epist. Ad fratres de Monte Dei*), see Künzle (1977), pp. 402; 456, with further references.

⁹⁸⁰ *Exemplar* 243; *Bdew* 245.1-15.

taste of what is to come. That is to say, they are a foretaste, and nothing more.⁹⁸¹ Suso carefully sets up a boundary between what is commonly possible here in this life and what is to come for the *electi* in the future.

Even more than the relatively moderate *Bdew*, the *Horologium sapientiae* presents a ‘safe’ teaching, in terms of orthodoxy and mysticism.⁹⁸² Mystical union is clearly outlined as a future event.⁹⁸³ As for the Disciple, although he is in an exalted state in this vision, he does not actually experience this kind of union: he is only told about it. At the end of this chapter, he asks to be allowed to ‘dwell’ in this vision, but Wisdom is strict: “On no account (*nequaquam*) ... your hour has not yet come. It is now the time for you to fight.”⁹⁸⁴ He is urged to go on as *viator*, a wanderer in this life.

Kurt Ruh stated that the *Horologium* belongs to ‘mystical literature’ only insofar as it adopts mystical parts from the *Bdew*. He pointed specifically to this part on *unio* in heaven as an example of such adoption. The details pointed to above show us that despite the many fundamental similarities between these two versions, the *Bdew* lies closer to a mystically oriented context in comparison to the *Horologium*.

It is characteristic of the profile of the *Horologium* that the idea of mystical union is something that is *postponed*: it occurs in heaven, not on earth.⁹⁸⁵ As a student and defender of Eckhart, and as a combatant of Free Spirit heresy, but also someone who himself had been suspected of perpetrating heretical ideas, Suso knew first-hand the dangers involved with the anticipation of union with God already in this life.

This is not to say that the *Horologium* is modified out of fear of retribution. It is just as likely that Suso sought to provide a full-scale spiritual compendium, a useful teaching for a wide audience, where salvation is the main point of orienta-

⁹⁸¹ See Chapter Two, pp. 146-53.

⁹⁸² See the introduction to this study. See also Ruh (1996), pp. 418-19.

⁹⁸³ Christoph Burger (2007) has demonstrated this tendency of ‘postponing union’ in the spiritual songs of the *Devotio moderna* movement.

⁹⁸⁴ See Chapter One.

⁹⁸⁵ There is, we recall from the two previous chapters, also the possibility for some of achieving a ‘high’ form of divine immersion already in this life, but this is only possible for very few, *paucissimi*, and is given little attention by Suso in the *Horologium*.

tion, not mystical speculation or anticipation in this life. The main difference between the *Bdew* and the *Horlogium* is that *unio*, in the Latin work, is moved definitively into the realms of heaven. At the same time as the mystical notion of *unio* are toned-down, or ‘transposed,’ the eschatological and moral aspects of the teaching becomes more elaborate. In Suso’s *Horologium*, a main tendency is that mystical union must wait: death and judgment comes first.

Conclusion

In the third and final chapter of this study we rounded off with some comments Suso's ideas of mystical union in his vision of Heaven (I, 11). With this vision in mind, we shall make some concluding remarks about the mystical profile of the *Horologium* and of our readings of this work as an early contribution to late medieval 'theology of piety.'

We have seen that Suso admits that exceptional 'transgressions,' states of mystical encounter of the soul with God, are indeed possible. But we have also seen that Suso is careful to delimit such experiences. The possibilities for humans, even the highest forms of 'breakthrough,' are articulated in a way that lies safely within the borders of what was accepted by anyone who would have taken care to scrutinize the orthodoxy of the work. Furthermore, there are two aspects that both 'restrain' this element of 'high mystical piety' in the *Horologium*.

First, we recall that there is a tendency to 'postpone' the concept of union. That is to say, rather than focusing attention on unique high experiences in life, or seeking knowledge about the human soul's unitive disposition by way of speculative metaphysic, Suso directs attention toward the afterlife. This is done by stressing that if such raptures occur in this life, this would only be a *foretaste* of what is to come in eternity. We said that Suso, in his vision of heaven, not only translates (obviously) and transforms the language of mysticism from the *Bdew*, but that he *transposes* the concept of union; he shifts emphasis toward the final and total union with God that is to occur only in heaven.

Second, whenever such states of rapture or foretaste are mentioned, it is carefully emphasized that this is only for very few. This has been observed on more than one occasion throughout this study and it is important when assess the mystical profile of the work. Suso's treatment of mystical experiences in the *Horologium* indicates that he did not expect the majority of his audience to be among these *paucissimi*, the advanced spirits.

We may recall another observation: discussions of rare occasions of rapture actually make out small parts of the work as a whole. In short, ‘high mysticism,’ to use a term preferred by Heiko Obermann, is not important for Suso in the *Horologium*.

That leaves us with the lower parts of the spectrum. We have observed that Suso in the *Horologium* cherishes what he calls “visitation,” or states of “sweet consolation.” Compared to the tenets of Christian mysticism that have received so much interest in the past decades—the detachment of the soul from all creaturely, the entering into the ‘abyss’ or the ‘ground,’ and the breakthrough and union with God—compared to such ‘high mysticism’ the sweet visitations mentioned often in the *Horologium* seem almost like the peak of mood swings. They are explicitly called “moments of good intention,” which make spiritual life easier and helps to persevere in a life of virtue. Nevertheless, when he describes such states, Suso clearly articulates a theology of *divine presence* that can be described as mysticism if we apply a broader meaning of the term. Berndt Hamm has contributed with attempts of defining Christian mysticism in terms of ‘presence’ or ‘near grace.’ This understanding is similar that of Bernard McGinn, an understanding that is also reflected in the title of his comprehensive study of the Christian mystical traditions, *The Presence of God*.⁹⁸⁶ Suso’s consolations certainly suggest an inner presence or proximity of a divine force, of grace, that is healing and fruitful for the human spirit on its way to final *unio*.

The *Horologium* is a work of mysticism—understood in a wide sense.⁹⁸⁷ To use Christoph Burger’s term, we might say that the mysticism found in the *Horologium* is *transformed* compared to the German mystical traditions that Suso is often associated with.⁹⁸⁸ In the *Horologium*, Suso’s approach to mysticism is integrative. He includes the possibility for a few of reaching high states of con-

⁹⁸⁶ See McGinn (1995; 2005a).

⁹⁸⁷ Kurt Ruh (1996) held that the *Horologium* is only to be understood as part of what he called ‘mysical literature’ insofar as it adopted mystical parts from the *Bdew*, which is seen to belong to an agreed-upon canon of mystical writings, as mentioned in the introduction to this study. A broader understanding of the phenomenon of mysticism such as that used by Berndt Hamm is more open to include a work such as the *Horologium sapientiae* as part of the many (changing) shapes of late medieval mystical thought and piety. See Hamm (2010a), pp. 205-6.

⁹⁸⁸ See Burger (1999).

templation, and he speaks to the many about divine influence, and inward consolations.

An important aspect of Suso's understanding of divine presence was observed in the study of his *tribulatio* concept: the sustaining of hardships in this life is understood, we saw, as a reenactment of Christ's suffering. By undergoing tribulations, of whatever kind, the presence of Christ is brought about in the devout person. By drawing on Volker Leppin's theory, we called this a 'piety of representation,' which, unlike a modern sense of imitating a role model, emphasizes the *actual presence* of the one that is imitated. This means that, given the right inner attitude of identification and suffering "for the sake of Christ," Christ is understood as actually present in the person that suffers hardships. Such an understanding of suffering as *re-presentation*, certainly borders on a mystical conception, and Suso on an occasion calls this an inner union with God's will. We should notice, however, that the emphasis in Suso's understanding of co-suffering lies not so much this inner union: rather, he seems to underline the moral and edifying aspect of co-suffering.

Whereas mystics such as Johannes Tauler or Meister Eckhart display an idea of suffering that emphasizes inner identification with the suffering God, Suso's emphasis is on the inner moral refinement of the individual, which, in turn helps his or her neighbors on *their* path to salvation. The presence aspect of Suso's *tribulatio* thought is an example of a way of thinking that is inspired by mysticism and emphasizes divine presence, but does not dwell on the aspect of inner unification. Like several of the tenets discussed in this study, the moral aspect of the *tribulatio* teaching has a strong salvation-orientation. Suso's emphasis is on the spiritual person in a process; when he speaks of tribulations' benefits he is just as concerned with the next life as he is with this life. That is to say, the main thing is not so much mystical 'achievement' or possibilities of the advancing soul in this life, but the effect of sustaining hardships in terms of an 'afterlife economy.' Suso's *tribulatio* thought has as its primary function to prepare the individual for the afterlife and to influence the individual judgment that is to

come. The saints, martyrs and elect in heaven reside there because of their patience through innumerable hardships in life.

We have seen in this study a theology of piety that, by various means, seeks to guide and aid the individual on her or his way to salvation. With its anxious but fervent—and thus very susonian—protagonist, the Disciple, and his spiritual process in the *Horologium*, we have seen a religiosity that is played out under a significant eschatological pressure. It has been a main point in this study to show that although divine presence and mystical theology is a part of the spiritual profile of the *Horologium*, and that the work is indeed innovative in terms of its integrative approach to mysticism, the real drama that the book portrays is eschatological. In this work Suso portrays the religious individual under pressure. As a true pioneer of *Frommigkeitstheologie*, the main task Suso set for himself in this work is to *respond* to this situation of eschatological pressure and provide means and aid to the religious individual on the way to salvation. Eucharist piety and practice is another significant area where Suso contributes with simplification, encouragement and ‘pressure relief,’ as we saw in Chapter Two. A number of challenges were attached to the Eucharistic sacrament in this period, and Suso provides interesting responses. The difficulty of understanding the change that occurred in the sacramental host was one of these issues. This difficulty is met by an effort of simplification and resolute rejection of scientific scrutiny of matters that belong to faith. A more severe difficulty was seen in connection with the pressure on the receiver’s devotional disposition. Suso responds to devotional deficiency in relation to the sacrament in several ways. With the challenges related to weakness in devotion and even fear of the sacrament, we saw, again, that the pressure on religious individuals, here in relation to the Eucharist, was essentially an eschatological pressure: a fear of sinfulness, of unworthiness and, thus, ultimately of damnation. Suso’s response, we saw, was to reduce fear by positive encouragement and, significantly, by ‘lowering the minimum requirements,’ thus making it easier for the fearful devotee to approach the sacrament. Such tenets of spiritual aid are key features in late medieval theology of piety, and Suso—with

the *Horologium*—can be considered a pioneering contributor within the new, wide reaching, and innovative theology that emerged in this period.

In the final chapter of this study we came closer to the eschatological fears and uncertainties that play such a central role in Suso's work. The story of the unprepared man in II, 2 conveyed intense multi-layered visions of the afterlife fears that, on the deathbed, became increasingly present. This chapter is an intense reminder of the fact that besides sweet visitations and new channels of interior or exterior grace mediation, the late medieval 'piety of presence' was also about the frightening presence of God's judging 'side' and of the threats of demonic forces and of the afterlife. In connection with death, this presence could become acute.

Suso's teaching on unprepared death (II, 2) is an *Ars moriendi* in a double sense: with the characteristic 'finalization' of life (Berndt Hamm's term), the message of Suso is to maintain a constant awareness of death, and thus be prepared at all times. The dialogue in II, 2 ends with the rudiments of an *Ars moriendi* 'proper,' where we saw Suso's understanding of an ideal deathbed conduct. Suso's art of dying takes the shape of a concentration toward the passion Christ, the force that mitigates God's angry judgment when everything else has been done. From this we may sum up a main principle in Suso's *Horologium sapientiae*. The ultimate solution to the pressure on the religious individual is not to be found in the individual herself or himself. Although humans must do what they can to prepare for the afterlife, the significance of human works are, in the end, vanishing—and the severity of God's judgment is extreme. When all comes to all, humans must turn to an outside force for help. This force is always the suffering Christ, whose presence is brought about by the friend of God through endurance of life's adversities, through devout reception of the Eucharistic sacrament, and, finally, in the moment of death.

Abbreviations

<i>Bdew</i>	Heinrich Suso, <i>Buchlein der ewigen weisheit</i> .
<i>Bdw</i>	Heinrich Suso, <i>Buchlein der warheit</i> .
<i>Bfb</i>	Heinrich Suso, <i>Briefbüchlein</i> .
<i>Exemplar</i>	Heinrich Suso, <i>Exemplar with Two German sermons</i> , ed. Tobin.
<i>Hor.</i>	Heinrich Suso, <i>Horologium sapientiae</i> , ed. Künzle.
<i>Horologium</i>	Heinrich Suso, <i>Horologium sapientiae</i> .
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia latina</i> . Ed. J.P Migne, 1844-55.
<i>RdU</i>	Meister Eckhart, <i>Rede der Unterscheidung</i> , "Counsels of Discernment."
<i>SCC</i>	Bernard of Clairvaux, <i>Sermones super Cantica Canticorum</i> , "Sermons on the Song of Songs."
<i>STh</i>	Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa theologiae</i>
<i>TRE</i>	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i> , ed. H. Balz et al. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1977-2007.
<i>LMA</i>	<i>Lexikon des Mittelalters</i> , Turnhout: Brepols, 2004 -, online edition: http://www.brepolis.net/ .
<i>Vita</i>	Heinrich Suso, <i>Leben Seuses</i> .
<i>VL</i>	<i>Die deutsche Litteratur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon</i> , 14 vols. ed. K. Ruh et al. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1978-2008.
<i>Watch</i>	Heinrich Suso, <i>Horologium sapientiae</i>

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